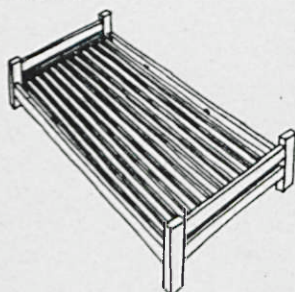


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EDITORIAL

How and why does Spare Rib work as a collective?

Spare Rib twitches with alarms of copy dates, production, print and distribution schedules. The timetable includes period pains and quarrels and worries and the floor's been swept clean countless times of discarded illusions.

The group of us working on Spare Rib came together more by accident than planning, some of us pop-eyed about feminism, some of us not particularly interested. As women and as people, our pasts had given us unequal chances. There were and are gulping differences in our class, in our education and in the expectations we had for our lives. The bridge between us formed because we have discussed our ideas together, developed our understanding of women's liberation together and because this led to working as a collective.

We came from a world of men, and with an idea of publishing as an awe-inspiring hierarchy of processes. To work collectively is to crash through the disastrous conventional attitude that some jobs are done by the clever and intellectual people (men, writers, editors, designers) and others are done by the not-so-clever, boring, even stupid people (women, secretaries, assistants, cleaners, accounts, selling advertising), to tumble tradition so that we, as women, make new chances, our own chances, to redefine ourselves.

The collective is an alliance between the six of us who work full time in the office. We share the tasks like writing and designing, and

use a daily rota for the mundane work, like collecting the mail from the post box. The responsibility for organising different jobs is based on individual interests and capabilities. Twice a week we have long meetings to consider together what ideas and decisions about the magazine are best.

The panics behind the disbelief expressed by some outsiders that a collective can work are the doubts from those who fear it will drown them. Reshuffled out of a hierarchy, how would they know who they were? End the split between their personal life and public persona and how should they behave? Collectives do mean the person flounders, blows bubbles, sinks into herself and out again. These dives of self-discovery are dependent on those who are swimming with you. Those who announce it's all a *competitive* question – of whether you are going to allow yourself to be dunked under the water, or whether you are going to be strong enough to dunk someone else – are those who've got the furthest to plunge if they dare. They are those who can sit on the edge and scoff, safely dabbling their toes in a superior fashion, because that is the only way to remain sitting on the edge.

There is no other way to produce Spare Rib except, inevitably and in contradiction to other commercial women's magazines, to work collectively. Our lives before had not demanded that we thought for ourselves, our work had not expected us to be responsible for what we produced. There was always some sort of boss to do that. People still pester us with the question, 'Who's in charge round here?' Without a boss, without any authority figure to lean on or ask questions of, we have had to learn for ourselves and teach each other, and it's quite a public fumbling producing a magazine. But all along it's been so that when our backs ache, we look at our work and know we exist, when our mouths smile and grumble, we know we are expressing ourselves, when our eyes blink with tiredness, we find our stares have had somewhere to focus.

Being, in a sense, reborn into the world has meant two things. It has meant that, although frazzled and hampered by the financial and practical problems of producing Spare Rib on a shoe string, we have discovered the free initiative of our own minds, the curiosity in how things work. It has meant that, despite the security and encouragement of being in a group of women, we have felt hindered by being responsible to the group, and limited all of a sudden to the job we have created. This has included uncomfortable self-criticism, the shattering of naive idealism, and sometimes bewilderment at the world we find ourselves in.

It is impossible to combine the contradictory roles for a 'feminine' woman without an agony of indigestion. Yet after years of this, at least you *know* what it's like. Taking the conflict out from inside you, into your external actions and relations with people, is essential to liberation and it's scary. Personal change is a violent experience. To put women's liberation ideas into practice has been to command our own work and alter the conditions for our work. These changes in turn affect the way you think and feel. Sometimes the changes feel good, and sometimes bad – or at least unflattering. You can't keep ▶



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Spare Rib Collective: Rose Ades, Marion Fudger, Rosie Parker, Marsha Rowe, Ann Scott, Ann Smith.

repeating, 'But my intentions are good', when the effect you have on others in a collective is bad.

Because the effort we put into operating successfully as a collective is so immense, and because the process has been much more devious than any of us expected, to simply state how things are organised at the moment on Spare Rib would be, perhaps, to present a kind of myth, a mysterious ideal. It might describe our structure as a totally rigid one, whereas it's not.

The magazine operates in a certain mechanical sphere, producing a new issue every month. Inside the mechanism, we've had to unwind the springs and work out a new, non-hierarchical structure which won't go rusty when it has to be fluid for us to move. Yet it's still a structure, so there's something to hang onto when the energy ebbs away, and so there's something concrete to analyse when faults appear.

The idea behind each person doing all the office work for one day in turn - though everyone types their own letters - is not only that we all participate in the routine running of the magazine, but to free ourselves from always being confined to the office. With six of us, and often more, in two small rooms, it's difficult to concentrate. First we shared it out one person per week, which didn't prevent guilt at not going into the office nor from worrying about decisions that might be sorted out during any absence. It took a long time to begin a daily system. This way we found relief to work more efficiently as we pleased - and sometimes when exhausted maybe spend the day in bed.

From one weekly meeting on a Friday, which was so packed out with administrative and production problems that we rarely discussed why we were doing the magazine and our ideas, we added a second meeting on Wednesday, and so more space for discussion. A lot of responsibility was shifted onto these meetings, onto a very determined collective sharing of power, and off the shoulders of individuals.

Equality has to be seen to be felt and realised. One way is to rotate the person in charge of calling the meeting ('chairwoman' is not really correct). This person reads out the agenda, takes the minutes, and notes decisions. She serves the meeting rather than presides over it. She does not count votes because we don't vote.

Voting is a system that works against democracy within the collective. First it implies you are not going to discuss ideas with an open mind, but that you are more likely to have worked out what you thought in advance and see any change in your opinion as a defeat. It also assumes that some people will be right and others wrong. Now that may well be true, but it is not going to encourage those who are wrong to understand why they are wrong. It probably acts to reinforce pre-conceived attitudes - and for women this often means male attitudes because for so long we have been saying only what's expected from us, rather than what we feel. Losing the vote when there's no possibility of your views being taken into account frustrates you and makes you resort to power tactics, attempts to bully or manipulate others. We try not to rush our decisions. We talk through problems for as long as is necessary to deal with everyone's concern, so there will be a unanimous decision based on understanding the circumstances. While our job is to work on Spare Rib, we are forced to do so, and while our main feminist commitment is to Spare Rib, we more or less have time to be able to.

For all sorts of reasons, people can dominate a meeting. If you're seen as more experienced, others will tend to keep silent, and this perpetuates roles and misunderstanding. If you know some people better than others, you will be more likely to reach easy agreement with them, instead of the right agreement. If you're scared - especially if others seem more articulate than you - you will quickly be persuaded you are wrong. This might be because you have had different schooling to the others and therefore use a different vocabulary.

To make this clearer, I shall give an example. Out of increasing consciousness comes the concern to identify *with* other women rather than *against* them. This is the common base for solidarity, and should be the place from which to be able to discuss different ideas without retreat into immovable vanity and irreconcilable pride. However, consider how it is symptomatic of women's conversations to say, 'Oh, yes, I know how you feel'. You may

seriously try to put forward ideas, and yet a woman stresses first and foremost how she identifies with how you must be feeling to say such a thing. She does not want to listen to you. She is trying to contain your argument within her own boundaries by enveloping your separate self in her own emotional pattern. Then what you say won't touch her. Under the guise of sisterhood you are still being oppressed if you allow yourself to be ignored this way. I do not mean that this is always patronising, just that it can be, and it's one of the difficult things to work out.

We can misuse subtle attempts to persuade the group one way or another without admitting what we are doing. To start the magazine off in 1972 without any experience, we needed a hierarchy. It takes a long time for everyone to learn about all the different functions necessary to produce a magazine, and there was inequality in understanding of what was entailed in each other's job and particular responsibility. This went on for about a year. We then split up the co-editorship of two into an editor and a news editor. Once this artificial bond had been detached into two human particles who quite obviously made mistakes and found the burden of being authority figures impossible, then all the other particles could begin to move around more freely and independently, whereas before they too had concentrated into pairs.

It was the first stage in transforming ourselves into a collective. During this time there is a collective flexing of muscles and there is flexibility in trying out new jobs. Then the muscles get stiff, because they grow tired of shadow boxing and need to work it out in the arena. For a bit we lean so heavily on the strength we discover by working together as women, we think we will threaten this if we are critical. People form allies within the group, and give each other reassurance and moral support at meetings. We are still not owning up to ourselves, but shrugging ourselves off into couples.

It is relatively safe and cosy like this, but it denies the value of the experience being gained by working on the magazine together. It is clinging on the familiarity of the selves we grow up with - the stereotype woman who keeps quietly in the background. It is a pretence, which stiffens into an intolerable wall ahead. Since we as individuals make up the group, the antics and fears of all this are reflected back onto ourselves until we feel beyond recognition. We have to fling the pretence off so violently the wall collapses. We are left hopping about feeling naked, with a silly desire to giggle, while keen to get on with the work. By Issue No. 18 of Spare Rib we were working as a collective.

Self-realisation is painfully difficult, and initially it comes with a shock. Feelings at group meetings when we begin to be critical of each other are desperate. We are wary of disagreement which could appear to put other women down, we have to cope with the resentment which goes along with a lack of confidence. The boxes we deliver our identities in become all sorts of shapes and sizes, grow distorted and get funny lumps. We each have to find ways of shaping them again, while listening to squeaks of timidity from inside ourselves at the thought of losing our protective wrapping. At times the worries pop out like a jack-in-the-box until we grow accustomed to the process and learn not to be frightened of each other's weaknesses but to care about them. The weaknesses are in fact our real selves - which have not had much of a chance to become strong because they've not been allowed to practise. The peculiarities are our real individual differences, once we begin sloughing off some of the skins of our past and displaying worked out opinions.

There is a lot more to say about the specific jobs done within the collective. Many of our problems arose from our woolly attitude to the delegation of duties. There is hostility to our group aims as a collective - and this is often directly experienced in our daily contact with the commercial publishing channels we rely on. We can't allow these mighty pyramids to overshadow us so we get too nervous to remain tolerant towards people's particular interests within the group. There is a sensitive balance between what is democratic for the individual and what self-criticism must be insisted upon for the survival of the group. The steady production of the magazine reminds us we are still a group after all.

Marsha Rowe

The Pill Report: Inform

Oral Contraceptives and Health



*An interim report
from the Oral Contraception Study
of the
Royal College of General Practitioners*



Millions of women take the pill. In Britain alone the number is about 2½ million and is rising. *Have these women made an informed choice, or rather, can they make an informed choice?* I want to consider this question in the context of a recent four-year survey of 46,000 women, half of whom took the pill. A report of this study, undertaken by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has been published in 'Oral Contraceptives and Health' (Pitman Medical £2.50).

Why is it necessary to embark on this exercise? There is evidence which suggests that not all doctors can be relied upon to provide adequate information in order to enable women to make an informed choice to take the pill. For instance, in a survey reported in *Doctor* (28.11.74), 600 GPs were asked whether they thought 'that all patients going on the pill should be specifically told of the

risks of such problems as thrombo-embolism, excessive weight gain and post-pill amenorrhoea (loss of periods)'. One in six thought not and even one in nine of family-planning trained doctors thought not. Or look at what happened when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the USA decided to give women some information on the pill. A leaflet was drawn up, giving details on what adverse symptoms to look out for, the estimated risk of blood-clotting, and emphasising the need for regular and comprehensive check-ups. However, this was not approved by the doctors, population experts and drug companies' representatives. It was whittled down to a final version which gives no detailed information and which encourages women to defer to their doctors. (As we have seen, doctors do not necessarily believe in telling the whole truth). I quote part of a feminist critique of this version: 'It is dangerous to women's health because it does not give women using the pill a constant reminder of the symptoms they must be on the look-out for. Some of these symptoms - headaches, aching legs - are precisely those that any busy woman with a family or a job where she's frequently on her feet would most likely ignore... (It) implies that the pill is almost an ideal method of birth control - provided the woman has a 'careful discussion' with her doctor. There is no indication that much is still unknown

about oral contraceptives...'

So, we need to understand the results of the RCGP survey in order to draw our own conclusions from it. But this is far from simple, for the report is written by 'experts' for 'experts'. In other words, any woman in the street hasn't a cat in hell's chance of understanding half the medical terms, let alone the implications of the statistics. But this of course doesn't worry the RCGP, for it expects doctors to 'use their knowledge and authority (my italics) to get the right message across.' The report's message is as follows: 'The risks are those which any well-informed woman would be happy to take', that 'adverse effects associated with the pill are rare and that poor continuation rates could and should be greatly improved. This can be attained if doctors use their knowledge and authority to help dispel those twin evils, fear and ignorance.' Rather than informing women, the RCGP is arrogantly telling women of a decision made on our behalf.

Now let's look at some of the facts behind these glowing conclusions. Thirty per cent more of those who take the pill than those who don't, complain of depression (see *Women's Report*, July/August issue). Migraine is twice as



Royal College of General Practitioners
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record envelope UNLESS SHE LEAVES
YOUR PRACTICE.

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Councils have been informed and have agreed to
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the pre-paid envelope provided, having checked that
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she left your practice.

79975

Information or Propaganda?

by Jill Rakusen

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DISCARD THIS PIECE

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Date of recruitment _____

Mount securely on Index Sheet

RECRUITMENT CARD
Complete this card at interview of Taker or Control, then post immediately to the central registry in the pre-paid envelope

Date of recruitment _____

Date of birth _____

Is this patient a
TAKER ☐ or
CONTROL? ☐

SOCIAL STATUS
* Occupation of husband or consort _____

His employment status:
Self-employed ☐
Employed: Manager ☐
Foreman or supervisor ☐
Other employee ☐
Apprentice ☐

* Describe as completely as possible, e.g. Engineer (machine minder) OR Engineer (installs central heating) OR Professional engineer.

PARITY
Previous live or stillbirths after 28th week of pregnancy _____

Date of last birth or abortion _____

ETHNIC ORIGIN
Mark ☒ one only

European ☐	Indian/Pakistan ☐	Arab ☐
Jewish ☐	Other Asian ☐	Other ☐
West Indian ☐	African ☐	Not known ☐

CURRENT CIGARETTE CONSUMPTION
For non-smokers enter "Nil".

Average number of cigarettes smoked daily _____

79975

RECORD BELOW EVENTS OCCURRING AFTER DATE OF RECRUITMENT

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Normal cervical smear _____

Abnormal cervical smear _____

Attempted suicide _____

PREGNANCY _____ L.M.P. _____

Conclusion _____

Abortion ☐ Single birth ☐ Multiple birth ☐

Any stillbirth ☐ Abnormality in any infant ☐

DEATH *
give cause as in Part I of death certificate

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(Block letters please)

MORBIDITY
State only the diagnosis of episodes of illness newly presenting during present period of observation or of recurring episodes of pre-existing conditions (e.g. migraine, hay fever)

Date	Diagnosis	
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐
_____	_____	☐

BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE Mark ☒ if hospital admission for this episode

CURRENT ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PRESCRIPTIONS

Date of prescription	Quantity supplied (months)	Name of preparation	Discontinue according to manufacturer's recommendations?
_____	☐	_____	YES ☐ NO ☐
_____	☐	_____	YES ☐ NO ☐
_____	☐	_____	YES ☐ NO ☐

† Do not prescribe more than months' supply at a time

Reason oral contraception discontinued † (specify) _____

Date discontinued _____

† Continue to record other observations on this patient

Date patient left your practice _____

Figure 1.1 Registration document.

common in pill-takers (1082 reported), headaches three times as common, and four times as many takers than non-takers said they went off sex - 372 as opposed to 86. (Incidentally, the small number who are said to have experienced this problem seems surprising when compared with a Leeds GP's discovery that half his pill patients completely lost interest in sex). The survey shows that takers are more likely to get virus infections (eg chickenpox and gastro-enteritis) and it seems that the pill may reduce immunity. There's a higher incidence of hay fever in takers and there seems to be a relationship between the pill and allergic response in general. There's a possibility that a few women got epilepsy who might not otherwise have had it. There is a 'high level of suspicion' of association with coronary thrombosis, strokes (16 in takers, 4 in non-takers) and deep vein thrombosis of the leg (41 versus 8). The increased risk of the latter varies between 81 to 112 in 100,000 users, depending on the type of pill taken. Twice as many takers as non-takers get 'pleurisy', but some of these could be mis-diagnosed cases of pulmonary embolism. There is possibly an increase in gall bladder disease, as well as an increase in certain female ailments such as urinary tract disorders including pyelitis and cystitis, cervicitis (which increases with pill usage) and other causes of vaginal

discharge. After four years the incidence of high blood pressure in takers increased by two and a half to three times the rate in the first year of pill-taking. Lastly, the death rate from vascular (blood vessel) disease among pill-takers was found to be three times as high as for non-takers.

These facts suggest that there might be different ways of interpreting the data. However, we did not see any alternative interpretations in the national press, and there were precious few in the medical press. One exception was Ellen Grant, writing in the British Medical Journal (13.7.74), who thought the conclusions were surprising in view of the evidence presented in the report.

Let us now take a more detailed look at the report. One of the most disturbing aspects is the way in which it deals with 'bias', the underestimation or overestimation of the effects. Now bias is a real problem in all surveys. One example of inevitable bias is a form of 'reporting bias': while pill takers in the survey had to visit their GPs every month to collect their prescriptions, non-pill-takers did not. Thus, takers had the chance to report symptoms which they might not otherwise have reported, and this would result in some over-reporting compared with non-takers. The report-writers argue this as

follows:-

1. They observed an overall increase of 19% in disease categories seen to be affected by the pill.
2. They compared that with the overwhelming number of disease categories that were seen to be unaffected by the pill.
3. They argue that if the pharmacological effects of the pill were real, they would have affected a larger number of disease categories.
4. Therefore, on the basis of this flimsy evidence, they conclude that the figure of 19% recorded above is 'likely to be predominantly due to bias. Thus 19% may be reasonably considered the average bias prevailing throughout the study.'

They then decide that 'vague and subjective complaints' such as headaches, migraine, mild depression and changes in sex drive can be expected to be the most highly biased, and they conclude the following: 'The reported increase in migraine and headache could be entirely due to bias'; concerning depression: 'substantial bias is likely to be present and the real increased risk of depression may be much smaller'; and concerning loss of sex drive: 'there is no clear indication that this is directly due to the pill'. >

The report makes these statements in spite of substantial evidence that 'depression and loss of libido are due to hormone and enzyme changes' (BMJ 13.7.74 p 116). It has also been found that 'it is possible to produce mood and vascular reactions (which include migraine and headaches) in everyone by altering their hormone balance although there is a wide variation in tolerance to these effects and in the time they take to develop' (Migraine News, March 1974). Hormone and enzyme changes have also been linked to other complaints: 'Headaches and migraine are only one aspect of hormone reactivity . . . varying the hormone ratios produced peak levels of other symptoms (such as irregular bleeding, vein complaints, depression, loss of libido, tiredness, irritability, aggression, flushing, dizziness, high blood pressure and venous thrombosis) and these different symptoms could be produced by very small changes in dose of either hormone in reactive women'. Also, while some women's migraine improves on the pill, 'the beneficial effect tends to wear off so that the migraines eventually become more frequent' (ibid).

Here is another example of the report's inconsistency. While saying in the body of the text that 'the evidence of an association between urinary tract infection and oral contraceptive usage seems firm', the short summary emphasises that there is a considerable degree of bias involved, and thereby reduces the impact of the survey's findings. A similar change of emphasis can be seen in the final chapter of the report. This chapter, headed 'Implications and Findings', is the one to which any unsuspecting person would turn if they didn't have time or couldn't be bothered to read laboriously all the way through. (Such a person could be you or me, or a hard-pressed journalist intent on disseminating some information quickly.) While admitting that it is not entirely valid to try to offset good and bad effects of the pill against each other, the report then tries to do just that in a chart of 'adverse and beneficial associations'. This chart is deceptive: some of the conclusions in the main body of the text do not agree with those in the chart. For instance, the increase of certain kinds of vaginal discharge were established in the text as unbiased, yet in the chart all vaginal discharge is shown as substantially biased. Similarly, with chickenpox; while the text says 'it is difficult to believe (chickenpox) is subject to any material diagnostic or reporting bias', the chart lumps it in with other virus infections and shows them all as being substantially biased. The way the chart shows beneficial associations of the pill is also interesting. The pill's beneficial effects on acne and sebaceous cysts are not shown as significant in the main body of the report, yet they are shown to be significant in the chart. Different criteria seem to be used for deciding on the degree of 'beneficial' and 'adverse' effects. We can only conclude from the above that the general summary of the report is irresponsible in its deductions from the main body of the text; 'jiggery-pokery' is how one statistician described it.

'Too many women stop the pill while still needing contraception', says the report, and it goes on to suggest that continuation rates for the pill could and should be greatly improved. But when one looks at the design of this survey, there are many disquieting features which lead one to question the report's right to make such blanket statements.

1. The conclusion that the risks of the pill are small is based on the belief that careful monitoring is the rule. However, from evidence in 'Parents and Family Planning Services' by Ann Cartwright, only 19% of the GPs and 57% of family planning clinics took the blood pressure of pill-takers, and older women - who are more at risk - were less likely to be examined than younger women. The survey of 600 doctors' attitudes in *Doctor* (referred to earlier) is also illuminating; whereas quite a high number (94%) thought regular examinations were necessary - although a disquieting 6% did not - there was considerable disagreement as to which particular examinations were necessary:

84%	thought	blood pressure tests were necessary,
69%	"	cervical smears " "
57%	"	weighing was "
52%	"	pelvic examinations were "
16%	"	breast examinations " "
9%	"	urine tests " "
5%	"	leg and vein examinations " "

If careful monitoring is not the rule, should continuations be improved?

2. Of the 23,000 pill-takers involved in the survey, by no means all of them took the pill for four years. You may be surprised to learn that 7,563 (32%) of the takers were lost to followup, over 11,000 were known to have stopped taking the pill, and it is very difficult to determine exactly how many women did take the pill over the four years. In fact, it seems to have been about 9,000, according to a letter from the Study Recorder to the BMJ. The report makes it difficult to work all this out. With age there is a similar problem: only 12% of the pill-takers were in the 35-39 age group, and even less (5.5%) were over 40. It is difficult, if not impossible, to work out how many women of these relatively older age groups took the pill for the four year period. So, we still do not know the relative risks of taking the pill as we get older. It's worth bearing in mind that in a study in 1969, Grant found that 'While most of the volunteers were under 35 years old at the beginning of the trial, most of the serious side effects occurred in women over 35.'

3. Length of survey: the report is only an interim report of four years' experiences; the survey is to last at least ten years in all. It was decided to publish an interim report because, among other reasons, 'the results are too important to be withheld for many years . . . Above all, most previous reports . . . have emphasised the dangers, and much ill-advised publicity has resulted. The unique characteristic of this Study is its ability to present a balanced view of the entire range of reported morbidity.' Apart from the report's shortcomings already mentioned, one wonders how a four-year survey can give a 'balanced' view of the pill's long-term - and as yet unknown - effects! To illustrate the point: although the report found only 5% of takers had high blood pressure, a Glasgow survey found that after five years, many women reached a point where there was a distinct risk to health from high blood pressure (see Women's Report, vol. 2 issue 4). Similarly, the report found no connection between the pill and breast cancer (and it was almost euphoric about the pill's 'protective' effect against non-cancerous lumps in the breast); but it could take twenty years before we know the true effects of the pill on something like breast cancer. Ian Burn, a breast specialist at Charing Cross Hospital, has stated

that he pays 'no attention' to the report at all and disagrees with it as follows: 'We are much too loose in the use of the pill for contraceptive purposes in the young. We should discourage young women from taking it for long periods . . . I do not say it is too great a risk to take. My plea is that we are aware of it and do not ignore the possibility.' The report provides flimsy evidence for encouraging women to stay on the pill for longer periods of time.

4. Deaths: as we have seen, the death rate in pill takers did show some increase particularly as a result of vascular (blood vessel) disease, where it was treble the rate for non-pill-takers. The report insists that no conclusions can be drawn from these figures because the number of deaths was too small and the evidence too limited. This would be true if there were no other evidence linking the pill and vascular disease. But, since the incidence of vascular disease in pill-takers is significantly increased, it is self-evident that the death statistics from the same causes cannot be simply dismissed. This example shows that the conclusions are not purely statistical and objective but that the report writers chose the evidence that tended to confirm the conclusions they wanted to find.

5. The report is keen to emphasise the 'beneficial effects' of the pill, which include the relief of pre-menstrual tension and painful periods (but not in all cases), and 'protection' against non-cancerous lumps in the breast. But remember, the pill does not have a beneficial effect on *all* menstrual disorders, and as for lumps in the breast, the report fails to remind us that pill-takers were originally healthier than non-takers, and women with lumps in the breast are often discouraged from going on the pill in the first place. Furthermore, in complete contradiction to the report, Ian Burn has said that the pill produces lumps in women's breasts, and if the women are taken off the pill, these go away. In this article I have tried to point out some of the reasons why we cannot trust the conclusions of the report. How relevant is this report to those of us who use or might use the pill? It seems to be limited. Each of us needs to know: 'What is the risk to me of, a) specific life-threatening disease, and b) specific life-disturbing disease - given my age, past medical history, the number of (and kind of) pregnancies I've had, the medical and social resources available to me, the number of years I have been or intend to be on the pill etc.' It is difficult to see how an individual can make any informed decision on the basis of the information contained in the report. For all the report has done is to identify conditions that are reported *generally* by pill-takers and non-pill-takers. It has drawn questionable conclusions from this, but in any case, as individual women, we cannot make informed personal decisions based on superficial generalities. The situation remains unchanged since Paul Vaughan wrote the following in 1970: 'The doctor who says the adverse reactions are not proven, or so rare as to be negligible, is really asking his patients to trust him beyond the point that is customary in the doctor-patient relationship. Like his patients, he can only wait and see'. ●

With thanks to Griselda, Sarita and Sam.

For people wanting information on the pill, a leaflet of questions and answers on the pill produced by a group of women is available from Sue Barlow, 150 Moselle Avenue, London N.22. Send an S.A.E.

LETTERS

Rape

To the Letters Department:

If Inez Garcia was raped, then as a human being I share her outrage. I accept that in her distress she may have felt justified in shooting her attackers. If these were the facts, I join in protest against her conviction for murder. IF these were the facts.

Your recent article (Spare Rib 30) accepts uncritically what the jury may have found doubtful. The Prosecution claimed there had been no rape and that the killing followed a fight. This was one of the critical questions in the trial surely? No justice is done by assuming for political reasons what may never have happened.

But there is more to it. Few people - men or women - would disagree with the Defence Committee's statement that "until men stop attacking women, women must be free to defend themselves by whatever means necessary." But what Inez Garcia did cannot fairly be called self-defence. When she killed her attacker she was no longer defending herself. The assault/rape had ended 20 minutes earlier.

Whether she was justified in killing him THEN is another matter: revenge is different from self-defence. And it is no answer that Garcia's revenge may "stop more rapes". No answer, at any rate, to anyone who rejects vigilantism. I have no sympathy with rapists, but believe strongly in everyone's right to have his/her guilt or innocence determined fairly. If the civil rights of suspects are to mean anything, rape victims cannot be allowed summarily to determine guilt and execute sentence. After all, Garcia may have shot an innocent man.

Nevertheless she should not be convicted of murder if she killed in a traumatic emotional state after being raped. In England, under the law on provocation and diminished responsibility, she would be guilty of manslaughter only. In California, where the law on these matters is almost identical, the verdict should be no different.

Neil Rosenbaum
London N.5.

Fair grading?

Dear Spare Rib,

I think you may be interested to hear of a rather shocking piece of discrimination. I teach fourth year juniors, i.e. the year which takes the tests for "banding" for secondary school. I have just seen the instructions for

marking the verbal reasoning tests.

To gain a Grade 1, girls have to achieve a 7 to 8 point higher score, also to gain a grade 2 rather than 3. No reason is given for this, although a colleague suggests that it may be because girls consistently do better than boys and therefore have to be marked down. To me it looks like a nice easy way of getting more boys into the top streams of comprehensives and into grammar schools.

I find it astonishing that this sort of thing is carried on by the largest Education Authority in England.

I hadn't noticed girls being given 7 or 8 extra marks in, say, Maths at G.C.E. level because they seem to do less well than the boys. But I suppose that is different.

Sincerely,
Jane Lawson
London S.E.3.

Nameless crime.

Dear Spare Rib,

I was rather surprised to read in No. 30 that the cover photograph was "of Mary Cecil". To me it looked very much as if there were three people on the cover.

I know, of course, that there's a general belief that children aren't really people, or that they're not of any importance. Why not treat them as mere appendages, not worth a mention? But then, some people think the same of women, and isn't that what Spare Rib is about?

Michael Whippman
London S.W.20

Yes, you're right; sorry. They were Sarah and Ruth Whippman, and we're very grateful to them for helping with the photo.

Biased Spare Rib

Dear Spare Rib,

I am a member of the M.L.F. (the women's liberation movement in France). I am visiting Great Britain at the moment. I have just finished to read one of your magazines.

According to that magazine, I have to come to the conclusion that ALL the women are nice, beautiful (whatever their physical appearances), work hard, say the truth always, are always right, etc. . . and that ALL the men are sexist, pigs, ugly, lie all the time, are always wrong. . .

Never is a woman wrong, and never is a man right. You are so biased that I must say that you are on the verge of intolerance. Please be careful.

Love J.G.G.

Sex

Dear Spare Rib,

When my anger had subsided after reading Christine Cooper's letter in No. 30 on her attitudes towards sex, my feelings turned to sadness at the pleasures Ms. Cooper is obviously missing in life. Normal she may be, because she is certainly not alone in her feelings about sex being "distasteful" and "disgusting", but like those of us who are unable to enjoy and appreciate a picture, a piece of music or even a really good laugh, there is a dimension in her life that is missing.

Unfortunately, so many of my generation (I am in my early thirties) were conditioned by their parents to believe that sex was wrong, sexual desire by women unnatural, and any admission of actually enjoying sex was - well - immoral. Far from being brainwashed by men, as Ms. Cooper suggests, we are trying to free ourselves from the conditioning of our parents, to teach ourselves that our bodies are our own, to be used as we wish; that we are neither reproductive machines nor sex objects but whole people, free to choose whether to make love or not.

I am truly sorry Ms. Cooper gets no joy out of sex, but I am boiling over with anger at the thought that she dares to dismiss my sexual desires as reproductive drive!!
Yours sincerely,
Margaret Bluman
London N.8.

Women's Football

Until a few years ago the game of football was completely male dominated. Most men like to believe that women footballers are a bunch of man-hungry "dolly birds", who don't know the first thing about the game, will gladly be booked by the ref, and do everything on the field but have a game of football. This is of course totally untrue. If I don't come away from a game with at least a few bruises and a bit of mud on my legs, then I know I haven't made an effort and have had a bad game. I'm not saying that footballers are a load of masochists but when you go in for a tackle you go in hard and fight for the ball.

I play for a league side and I've met many women's teams, most of which have a high standard of play.

I haven't met any women managers or women referees yet though and I think that women's

football desperately needs them!

Little attention is paid to women's football and I think it could get a lot of support (and players) from the women's movement.

If anyone is interested in joining a team, here is the address to write to for further information:

Miss P. Gregory (Women's F.A.)
7 Mayfield Rd.
Hornsey N.8.
Tel: 01-340 6661
Yours in sisterhood,
Sharon Dunham.

*Dear Sharon

Coincidentally your letter arrived at the same time as this ad for Barclays Bank sent in by Fiona Aitken, Ashfield, Notts.



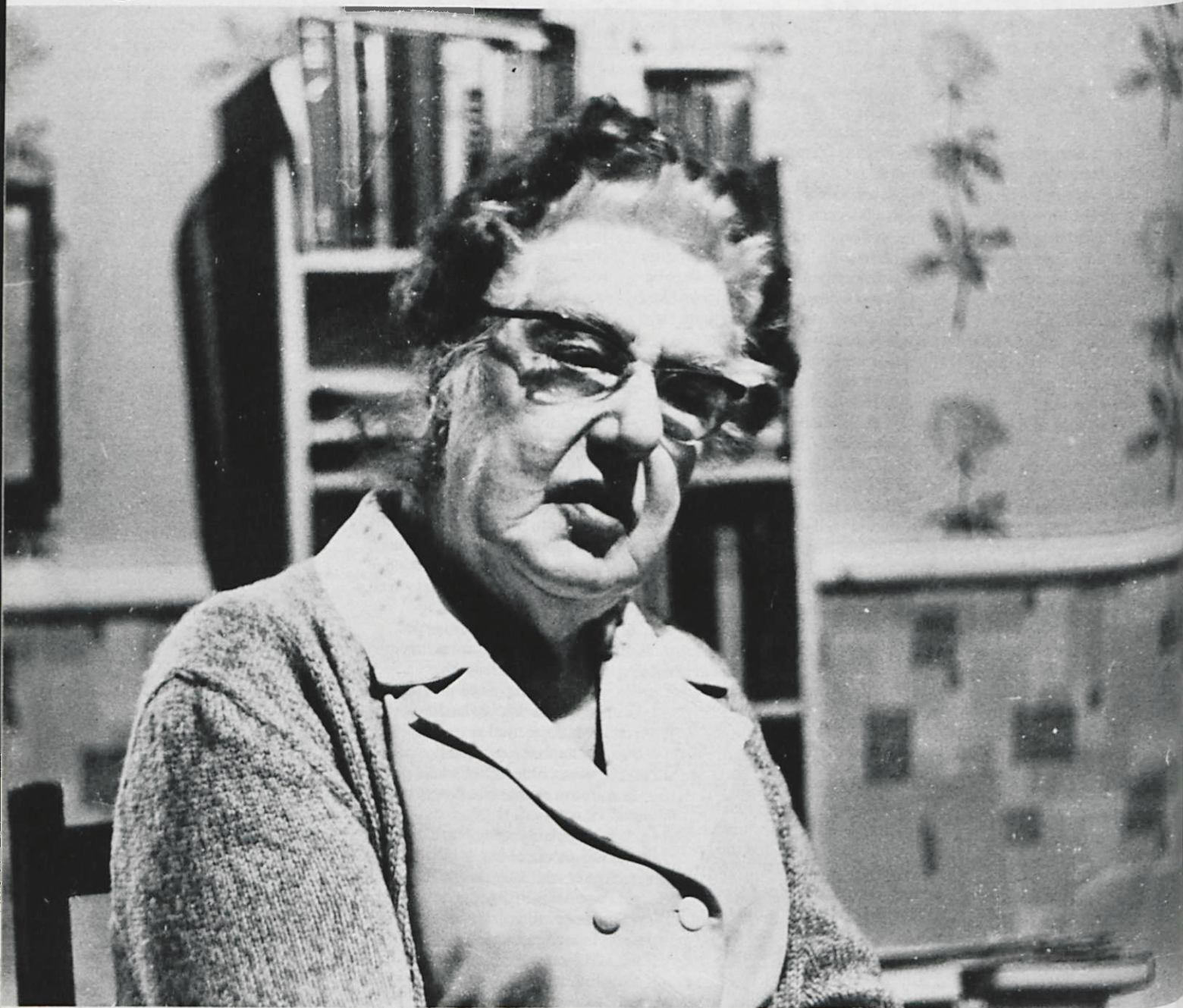
Football is not one of her strong points.

But you wouldn't have her any other way. Because she's special. She's your future wife.

BARCLAYS

a good bank to get behind you.

Jessie



You're a bonny fighter, Jessie, but you've got the wrong name. I think we should call you Battling Bella.

Thus, as Jessie Stephen says, does the labour movement coin nicknames for those it really respects. Jessie is now 81. A socialist and pacifist all her life and, before the First World War, a militant suffragette – a political connexion which she remembers as typical of many women's experience at that time – she is still now involved in trade union work and is a fierce believer in full and genuine equality for women. She was the first woman president of the Bristol Trades Council, an office she only gave up a couple of years ago.

The eldest of eleven children of a caring, though overworked mother, and of a skilled tailor, who was nonetheless quite often out of work, she was brought up in some poverty. From an early age Jessie took various jobs after school hours to help keep the family going. Her father was, from the beginning, a member of the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), which was established in 1893 specifically to work for parliamentary representation for, and by, the working class, but which in practice in its early years encompassed a wide range of labour and socialist opinion and activities.

Here Jessie's early political career is told in extracts from her unpublished autobiography and from recorded conversations with Susie Fleming and with Gloden Dallas, who edited and annotated the material.

Good gracious, when I was fourteen my father gave me Darwin to read. It was double dutch to me then, but when I was a couple of years older I did read it and appreciated it. He used to read all the Rationalist Press publications and stuff by Engels, Tom Paine, though he left school when he was eight.

I was a member of the Socialist Sunday School. My dad insisted on us all going there, and what we learned was in no way inferior to the ethics taught elsewhere. We had all sorts there – we had Catholics, Protestants, Jewish children. We all went in it together. Two of our family were christened there. There were about 50 to 60 boys and girls every Sunday morning, but in the afternoon I had to go to the ordinary religious school because mother was very devout in that respect. She was C. of E. and dad, of course, was agnostic, more or less, and when the parsons used to come and visit us, there'd be quite a set to.

Jessie did well at school and won a scholarship, but felt that without a regular wage she would only be a burden on her family. So she became a domestic servant and started trying to organise her fellow workers 'below stairs'.

At fifteen I became a pupil teacher and was much elated, for it had always been my ambition to teach. Unfortunately for my dreams unemployment became worse so there was nothing for it but to leave school. I had to choose between taking jobs which ran between half a crown and four shillings a week, and the prospect of domestic service where board and lodging helped the money wage. And it was my experience that there were far too many employers who treated their domestic help as slaves. And the sons of the house, they thought they had a right to walk into your bedroom – that's a fact. If a girl got pregnant they sacked her, and if a son was responsible they sent him away. But the girl never got any money. If she couldn't go back to her family there was nothing else she could do but go on the streets, and a lot of them did, sometimes girls of fourteen and fifteen.

And these domestic servants, they were much more intelligent than people gave them credit for at that time. Employers used to talk about them being ignorant Highland so-and-sos. They weren't so ignorant. When I began to think about ways and means of organising my fellow servants and started to canvass in my spare time, I was really encouraged by the interest the girls showed. I tried to get their support for a trade union. And this work was beginning to get results in recruitment of members of the new *Scottish Domestic Workers' Federation*, subscription three halfpence weekly. I used to go round the back doors of big houses, getting the girls to join the union.

About the same time, in her late teens, Jessie was much involved in socialist and suffragette agitation in Glasgow. It was through these activities that she was brought in touch with John Maclean, perhaps the greatest of the Clydeside socialists and also with Helen Crawford, a Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.) militant and socialist who was, like Maclean, an uncompromising opponent of the Great War.

Well, I got my political training when I was only 12-years-old. I was selling the *Labour Woman* outside the St Andrew's hall, Glasgow. That was a very small magazine, they only paid a ha'penny for it in those days. Keir Hardie was the speaker, and when he came out and saw me – I was very tiny then – he said, 'Ah, that's alright, lassie, ye'll be a real credit to the movement yet.' I was so proud of this I ran all the way home and told my dad, and he says, 'Maybe you will, maybe you will.'

I became vice-chairman of my local I.L.P. branch, Maryhill, when I was 16. That was the youngest age you were allowed to join as a full member and, around that time, I became a member of the W.S.P.U. in Glasgow and attended branch meetings and demonstrations whenever I could. It must have been when I was in service. I know that because that's how I was able to drop acid into the postal pillar boxes without being suspected, because I walked down from where I was employed in my cap and apron, you know, muslin apron, black frock, nobody would ever suspect me of dropping acid through the box.

Mind you, we in the W.S.P.U. attacked property but never life. As far as the more violent things were concerned, I don't think the ordinary working woman was quite so anxious to be in that sort of thing. They didn't mind the smashing of plate glass windows but they felt the other things, for instance the burning down of castles, were risking human life and they were against that. You could see that there was a sort of dissent to the widening of the violence.

We had these regular meetings, open air and indoors. And we used to get big meetings. It wasn't a question of hole in the corner. And for women to come out like that, and with the Liberal Party doing practically everything they could to smash the whole idea of what the women stood for. I know the Liberals are always claiming to be progressive, but they were our bitterest

enemies. They could've given us the vote way back in 1910, but they wouldn't do it and we had to wait till the end of the war, and then got it at the age of 30 instead of 21.

All kinds of people came to our big meetings, working women, even working men, and I think the idea of the middle-class men was that this must not be allowed to continue, and this was why we had all the interruptions at the meetings and so on. That one was pretty violent when Mrs Pankhurst was on, and she was released under the Cat and Mouse Act. That was pretty violent that night because the police had been so careful – they were on the roof, they were in the hall, all over the place – to see that she didn't get into the hall. Then when the chairman announced that she had the greatest pleasure in announcing the arrival of her respected and beloved leader – because you used very emotive words – everybody thought it was a joke. But we didn't because we knew that something had happened. We had all the platform with barbed wire around it, with bunting over the barbed wire, with flower pots and all sorts, and one woman had one of those revolvers with blank shot. And when Mrs. Pankhurst stepped forward, you should have seen the faces of the police. They couldn't believe their eyes.

Nobody told them how she got in there, but we were told afterwards that she came in the Corporation laundry basket. The W.S.P.U. organiser got in touch with some of our Labour councillors – well, they were I.L.P.ers in those days – they were very good. Well, when the police tried to drag poor Mrs Pankhurst away, they rushed forward to the bunting and got their hands all lacerated. We were throwing flower pots, there were all sorts banged at the police. You didn't think about it being violence, you only wanted to protect the woman you'd brought there. The police were absolute bullies in those days, and the *Daily Mail* and papers like that were working up some sort of agitation; we were having the clothes torn off our backs, the hair torn out of our heads before we'd ever been violent. Some of the ordinary men were even worse than the police. They threatened to throw me in the river once and I said, 'Well, if you throw me in, I'll take you with me.' And that was trying to be brave but, you know, you were scared to death.

To counter such hostility the Glaswegian suffragettes, and similarly those in other provincial cities, could rely on a network of support, much of which came from within the local socialist movement.

Och, yes, there were my comrades in the branch. There were three or four of them who were dockers who were really keen I.L.P.ers, really keen. They certainly passed the word along, and when the meeting took place there they were, lined up against the walls. Nobody suspected, of course, that there'd be anybody there to help these poor, weak women. Weak is right, too. Yes, we had quite a lot of help from ordinary working men and women in those days. Then there was Mr Austin who had a chain of tea rooms, the ordinary cheap tea rooms in the city and he used to give me the free use of them for my meetings. That's the kind of help we used to get.

Mary Miller, who was the woman editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, was very sympathetic to the socialist movement and also to the domestic servants. She believed in the work of the W.S.P.U. although she couldn't declare herself. We had a curious combination. You had very wealthy women, upper class women, and the ordinary working woman, but we got on well together. I remember Helen Crawford who was an I.L.P.er. She went to gaol for breaking windows, and was gaoled during the war, as was John Maclean. Good old John, I knew him well because he used to come and speak at some of our meetings and demonstrations. They treated him cruelly. He was held in very high regard in the socialist movement, no doubt about that.

Jessie's feminist convictions kept her loyal to the militant policy which pursued in such a single-minded way the achievement of the vote as a panacea for all the ills inflicted on women. Her socialism, and feelings of the 'ordinary' women whom, by the nature of her work and social background, she met day-to-day, convinced her that the vote alone was no solution to the problems which women were having to face.

There was a lot more than the vote. You see, most of these books – I've read a good few of them at different times – they don't really go very deep. They don't talk about the discussions we used to have, the aspirations the ordinary member of the W.S.P.U. was thinking about. These were about jobs, about wages, about the present matrimonial laws. All that sort of thing used to be discussed by us. I didn't know a lot about it, but some of these women did. One of them was a divorcee – a socialist, mind you – and a very hardworking woman, and she used to bring up things like this which were interesting to people who knew something about it.

And those of us who were socialists were far more interested in economics than they gave us credit for. Some of these women who were really active in the W.S.P.U. had deep convictions about the economic state of society, and



Lloyd George received this delegation from the Glasgow W.S.P.U. in 1910. Jessie top left.

there was the question of housing, and the question of making life easier for the woman in the home, and maternity benefits. The vote was only the means to an end, to a new state of society where women could be treated as human beings, not as second class citizens.

Largely as a result of her political activities, Jessie found congenial work hard to find in Glasgow. She went to London, where she made contact with the English Domestic Workers' Union and, with their aid, found a job with people who did not object to having a trade unionist maid.

After the outbreak of war she returned to Glasgow, and did various jobs which, until then, had been regarded as men's work, just as hundreds of other domestic workers had been tempted to try their luck in wartime occupations. It was during this time in Glasgow that Jessie met Sylvia Pankhurst who was campaigning for adult suffrage and an end to the war.

Naturally I introduced myself to Sylvia. She asked me what I was doing and told me a lot about her work with the Workers' Suffrage Federation (W.S.F.) in London. As I moved away she said suddenly, 'How would you like to come and work for me?' I said I would like to come to London but I did not have the fare and would have to ask my father first. Dad was pessimistic. He told me not be foolish and to stay where I was, but mother was more sympathetic. One night she handed me some money when we were alone and said I wasn't to tell anyone where I had raised it. Till now I have kept the secret of how I raised my fare. In Bow, where Sylvia had her headquarters, she had established a creche and a clinic and, though her strong pacifist views were not very popular, her work in this district was highly regarded and she herself almost worshipped.

When Sylvia decided that Jessie had had enough experience in organisation and propaganda in London, she was sent to the provinces to start new branches of the W.S.F. and to raise money for the work in Bow.

There were two of us, Mrs Boyce, a working woman who'd brought up a family of twelve kids and was going round the country, just like me. She gave me lots of hints as to what to do. She says, 'Always take with you a pound of candles because you'll find in some places no light, when you'll want to read in your bed and you can't.' She was a lovely old soul, I must say. She'd been in the W.S.P.U. and, of course, she was a socialist as well. She was a fine worker. She was 50. I think of some of those women there in the East End.

When I was working for Sylvia I got thirty bob a week and it wasn't enough sometimes to pay my digs when I was travelling through the country. But I used to go to the I.L.P. branches as well - freelance, of course, because none of us were on a salary - we just had to depend on the branches to pay us what they could. They might manage to give you £3 one week, but others couldn't raise that. So they gave you hospitality and expenses.

You couldn't buy new clothes on that. In fact, I went to Burnley market once and bought a remnant there for 6d. to make myself a blouse. My first stop on the W.S.F. tour was Sheffield where I was lucky enough to find lodgings with Mrs. Manion. The friendly atmosphere helped me enormously in this first provincial venture. The author, Edward Carpenter, lived just outside Sheffield and Mrs Manion told me of her interest in his books. Her favourite was one whose title I can't remember now, but I think it was *The Coming of Love* (*Love's Coming of Age*). Over this she would enthuse and recite passages from memory. In the socialist movement it was very widely read.



Jessie as a young woman

Jessie was very successful as a fund raiser, due in part to her capacity to get on with, and through to, 'what they call the lower echelons of labour'. Her usefulness didn't prevent, though, a few rows with Sylvia who could 'charm when she liked, but at the core was inclined to be as autocratic as her mother and her elder sister, Christabel.'

She continued to work for the W.S.F. until Spring 1917, when she was chosen as an I.L.P. organiser for Bermondsey, in which branch the leading figure was a Quaker, Dr. Salter.

The doctor felt we must attract the women and girls in local factories – in short, I was to act as industrial organiser as well. But because the I.L.P. saw my industrial work was putting burdens on me, it was decided to appoint two other women to help build up the political organisation.

Eventually I had two ex-suffragettes, Mary Richardson, who slashed the Velasquez painting, and Ada Broughton. Between all my other activities, I stood outside factory gates, handing out union literature. Success did not come at first, though a wage increase won for leather workers had aroused much attention. But by autumn 1918, over 5,000 girls had been recruited (into the National Union of Women Workers).

Most of Jessie's life since that period has been spent as a political and trade union organiser, with particular concern for the problems of women. In the '20s she was active in the Workers' Birth Control movement.

I've had people coming up to me at my meetings, asking my advice because they knew I belonged to that group and, you know, you listen to some tragedies. It's not because they wanted children but they didn't know how to stop them. The Workers' Birth Control people really were pioneers.

They used to hold propaganda meetings and issue little pamphlets.

Curious thing, when I was secretary to Leonora Eyles who wrote for *Women's Own* when it was a 2d magazine, if she ever had an article on birth control, do you know, we'd be flooded out with letters of inquiry for weeks later.

The methods were a bit crude then. There was either what they called the 'cage' in those days or, apart from that, there was a fine sponge with a silk thread attached to it, soaked in quinine and olive oil, or quinine and linseed oil, but preferably olive oil because it didn't smell so. They had to insert this, and immediately after intercourse, they pulled this down because they'd impregnated the womb with this stuff and that prevented conception. You know, my mother used to speak to me, being the eldest, you see. She'd say, 'I don't know, I wish I didn't have all these babies.' I said, 'Why don't you ask dad to do something about it.' She says, 'Oh no, he says it's not natural.' A socialist, mind you, and he hadn't learned enough about that. It so happened that, a few months later, I came across a book which gave all the information and I handed it to my mother. I said, 'Now, mother, here's your chance, read this.' She was 42 at the time and she didn't have the menopause till she was 54. She had no more children though. That's what you call teaching grandma to suck eggs.

For a young girl of her time, an independent and unconventional life like Jessie's can have been neither personally easy nor readily acceptable to society at large. What were its difficulties and rewards?

In those days it was unusual for a woman, especially a young woman, to lead an independent life. And a woman speaker was fair game as I learned in the days of the suffrage campaign. One heckler in Sheffield shouted, 'Would you rather sleep with a woman or a man?' Remembering a somewhat similar question put to a prominent suffragette and her reply I said, 'A woman, wouldn't you'. There was a burst of laughter at this and, like the Arabs, he folded his tent and silently stole away.

Some of the women lived together but of course the ordinary working girls never got to that stage. They hadn't got the philosophy to start with and they couldn't have afforded to live like that. It's still true. There isn't the money there. They might be prepared to experiment if they had the means. There was also a cult of free love in the socialist movement in my youth but we won't go into that too deeply.

As to my public political life, my dad was quite proud of it as a matter of fact. He used to come to meetings with me and all that sort of thing, but mother wasn't so keen on it. You know, she says to me, 'You ought to be thinking of having a home of your own instead of rushing about all over the place.' And later on in life she used to say, 'Look at all your sisters, what lovely homes they have' and so on and so on. My dad was with me then. 'What's wrong with this home' he says, 'She's got a lovely flat here, nice furniture all on her own. I wish I'd been able to do what she's done.'

The curious thing about my mother, even though she was so quiet and the very opposite of my dad, when the deaconess came up to her once and said, 'Oh, Mrs Stephen, you must be so hurt over your eldest daughter and her brother', preaching peace you see. She says, 'When the country's at war they should be doing their bit.' And mother says, 'I'm not ashamed of my boy and girl. They're doing what they were taught by their father when they were youngsters. I'm very proud of them. I wish all my boys and girls had taken that stand.' And the next May Day procession, there was mother. She'd never gone on a May Day procession in her life, and with a little pennant, marching.

It would be inaccurate and unjust, by concentrating on the events of more than fifty years ago, to give the impression that Jessie in any way lives in the past. She was the first woman president of the Bristol Trades Council, an office she only gave up a couple of years ago, and is still active in the T.U.C. How does she estimate the progress of women since the winning of the vote?

Most of my public work has been concerned with the organisation of women and advocacy of their claim to equal status with men. Too many assumed that the victory on woman suffrage would bring other benefits automatically. When the women were glorying in this new-found so-called freedom, we were only just beginning. For those of us who looked ahead, it appeared rather to be the beginning of the real fight and so it has proved to be, despite the small gains made on the way. Take the myth about bra burning fabricated by the American press. Such an incident never took place and yet male journalists and radio and television broadcasters continue to repeat the lie every time they find an opportunity to sneer at Women's Liberation. Truly, you need seven league boots to catch up with an untruth. For me, and others who share my views, this is another example of the prejudice that dies hard in our menfolk. ■

Greenwich,
May 1974,
Latitude 51,28',
Longitude 0,0'

1.

Inasmuch as they tried to place themselves at the centre of the world, they made a mistake. It was impossible for them not to push each other off the meridian.

2.

In 1893 two hands were washed off the jib-boom of the Cutty Sark. Everything possible was done to save them. But because of the weather, and because she was under full rig, the ship had to make a 3-mile scope to return to the point where the men were believed to have disappeared. After a while the search was abandoned. There was no point in continuing, and the ship had her cargo to deliver.

'Where is the ship, my brother? The ship has gone, she will go on to Antwerp without us. We are alone in this sea. Christ have mercy on our souls!'

3.

The river seems sleepy today, trembles with the light.
Lovers stand clasped against the railings:
'Let me drown in the waters of your eyes!'

The water stirs against the sea. The tide is turning, soon the wharfs will echo with the sound of working craft.

A dead warehouse rat has been left by the ebb-tide on the shore.

4.

The Cutty Sark sailed the China tea-trade from 1880-1887. Her fastest speed to England was 107 days in 1871. In spite of the speed with which the clippers accomplished the journey, China and England remained exactly where they had always been.

We will make a bargain. I will exchange my mouth for your breasts. The contract will last as long as the moment in which it is made.

Our ship races between us. We are not on board the ship, though at times we may indulge in that illusion. The ship is merely a glance we exchange. It is a record we enjoy, an idea we examine, a joke we share, a meal we cook and eat.

When I come inside you it is our ship docking after its voyage. The ship loads up in your harbour, sets sail again, carrying new messages and goods. Your cargo is nearly delivered. The ship drops anchor in my port. You give out a cry.

Trade enriches both nations, when both nations are equal.
When they are not equal, the rich grow fatter, the poor
countries are despoiled.

'If you do not accept my terms, the next cargo I send you
will consist of bullets and shells.'

5.
I am a very romantic man.
This river, these lights, these passing boats –
I give them all to you.
I will do anything for you.
I will die for you, my little one.
How is it possible for you to be happy without me?

6.
In 1895 the Cutty Sark was sold to the Portuguese,
renamed the *Ferreira*, and rigged as a barquentine.

Newsflash, Lisbon, May 28, 1974

Lisbon went without bread, buses and trams today as
bakers and drivers struck for higher pay against a
background of mounting concern over extreme
left-wing disruption.

'Let us now realise the ill-use being made of the
freedom offered to the people of Portugal in the past
month. We are almost astonished by the ingratitude,
the abuse of the offer made with such feeling and
dignity.'

– General Carlos Galveo de Melo.

7.
There are many ways two people can stand on a
straight line. They may stand face to face, back to back,
one behind the other, side by side, facing to the left or
right, side by side facing in different directions.

It is, however, impossible for them to stand on the same
point on the line at the same time.

8.
We lie beneath your indian bed-spread, separately
together, along our particular meridian. Latitudes of
darkness cross between us, like the sea.

John Hoyland



NO ENTRY
apprenticeship

give priority
to opposite sex

Women and Education Newsletter



During the workshop on women and education at the Bristol Women's Liberation conference, two women volunteered to produce a newsletter which would keep the discussions going that had started in the workshop. Others joined them and the Women in Education Newsletter has been appearing ever since with its mixture of articles, news, booklists, course lists and contact addresses.

Women and Education Newsletter began in 1973, and since then we have produced five issues. The group involved in production has varied in size and composition: we are students and teachers, concerned with the whole age-range in education, from pre-school to college of education and poly. Some of us came

to the group through our commitment to women's liberation; others don't belong to W.L. groups. Some of us are politically committed, for example to International Socialists, Communist Party, Labour Party; others have no alignment. The group has included men. We feel that our variety of experiences and political views are valuable, and that it's important for the Newsletter not to have a formal alignment or political commitment. In fact we want to broaden the group; we need to bring in more parents and school students.

In the third Newsletter, we wrote: "We see the necessity for discussing ideology and might agree to take a stand on a particular issue but we do not necessarily expect that an overall collective view need emerge or that individuals will feel committed to a manifesto . . . Our brief for the newsletter is to publish anything to do with sexism and education together - including attitudes and institutionalised aspects of discrimination. A further important task is to publicise positive ways in which the experience of women is dealt with at all levels of education, such as Women's Studies, courses, and curricular and organisation changes . . . All articles are individual contributions and we would publish any relevant material even if we did not ourselves agree with it. We limit ourselves to sexism and education (although this is not all we consider important in education) in order to be effective."

One of the things we're most aware of, from our own experience and from contacts and letters, is the isolation of sisters trying to cope with or fight sexism in their schools and colleges. We feel the Newsletter can help, not only by providing news and contacts, but also by reporting individual experiences and initiatives in a very specific way. We also need to develop our theory of teachers' and students' behaviour in the classroom; to make positive as well as negative analyses. We want to consider the position of men as teachers and students - how non-sexist teaching works from their point of view, and how they relate to Women's Studies. For all this we rely on contributions from readers. We try to provide in each Newsletter a mixture of news (contacts, events, reviews), reports, facts, articles which are personal, practical and theoretical.

One effect we would like to have is the setting-up of Women and Education groups, of which there are a number already in towns and within colleges. We would not want to separate theory and practice or to isolate ourselves in the production of the Newsletter. We are involved in a Manchester Education group, run separately from the Newsletter (from an organisational point of view), with a large mailing list; we've had meetings and a non-sexist teaching resources day and spoken to other groups.

We produce 600 copies of each issue at present which covers our costs. About 150 - 200 sell by subscription, and the rest through bookshops and at meetings etc. Typing, duplicating and collating (by woman-power) has been laborious, time-consuming and a major problem; we are hoping to print the next issue and produce 1000 copies.

Present subscription rates are 35p for 3 issues (20p for students, unemployed, women at home) - 5 copies of a single issue are 50p. Available from Jill Walker, 107 Egerton Road, Fallowfield, Manchester 14. Bookshop enquiries to Judy Samuel, 23 Chandos Road, Chorlton, Manchester 21

Women and Education Newsletter
Group

circular argument

NEWS



Angela Davis is currently involved in an international campaign to free political prisoners in South Africa.

Her commitment derives from an awareness within the black movement in the United States of the links between imperialism and racism.

As joint leader of the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Oppression she came to London for three days in December 74.

1. Who is Angela Davis?

Early in 1970 Angela Davis, a black Communist and Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, got involved in the campaign to free three of California's black prisoners, the Soledad Brothers: George Jackson, John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo.

George Jackson's 17 year old brother Jonathan was killed during the Slave Insurrection of August 1970 in Marin County Courthouse. This so-called shootout, in which Judge Haley and two black prisoners also died, took place during the re-trial of a black accused of assaulting a prison guard in San Quentin.

When it was learned that four of the guns used were allegedly registered in her name, Angela was

accused of kidnapping, murder and conspiracy. She went on to the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List and was arrested in New York City in October 1970. President Richard Nixon and J Edgar Hoover of the FBI went on to national television to say that a 'terrorist' such as Angela Davis had been caught as a warning to other 'would be terrorists'.

The charges were trumped up. A mass international campaign around the demand *Free Angela Davis* coalesced as a form of resistance to political oppression. Explicit recognition of the collective symbolism of the term *Free Angela* was made by radicals everywhere and by Angela herself. At a party held after her acquittal on all charges in June 1972, she

realised that "for one of me there were thousands more political prisoners inside, for whom the organising still needed to be done."

2. Stardom and Political Subversion

At the press conference she gave at the House of Commons on her arrival here in December I felt the importance of writing about the relationship between the mass media and the phenomenon of stardom.

Within the capitalist spectacle Angela has to be contained as a movie queen. Her personal vulnerability within this structure echoes the political vulnerability of the radicalism she represents.

If she/the celebrity participates in the existing media (TV, radio,

ANGELA DAVIS: SISTERS AND BROTHERS

press), she is the catalyst for three days of liberal editorialising. But she will have no control of editing, no guarantee that anything she says will appear in print. She will be allowed fame and accorded reverence while at other times the movement of oppressed peoples about which she speaks is mocked and abused.

But the subversive who is also a celebrity must recognise that there is an absence of a means of communicating revolutionary ideas and practice as effective as that employed by the bourgeois press to discredit those ideas. The suppression of news from Northern Ireland is now well documented. Carole Miller's "army" of anti-trade unionist women in Oxford gets front page banner headlines in the *Daily Express* day after day, while the *Sunday Telegraph* concedes a barely visible photo caption of a few of the Heywood strikers huddled round a primus stove. Thus the political need to reach the mass of the people and to seize the time will compel Angela to struggle within our culture in order to struggle against it.

Within this complex and contradictory moment the strains for the woman who is a celebrity in a press conference are evident and violent. Angela confronts an atmosphere of apparent nonchalance, of calculated slouch and supercilious chain-smoking. She faces a tribunal every time she opens her mouth, it's the journalists' mafia. She must be flawless, she mustn't slip up. If she hesitates, or retracts a statement, she's less credible. She has to smile while describing conditions in which the only positive response is to spit. 35 of the 50 journalists at this press conference were white men. But she must respect their needling with dignity otherwise the movement is on Death Row.

News reporters are trained to individualise reality. They want human interest stories and a personal slant. In actuality the emotional limits to their copy are strict. Passion between individuals is OK but commitment to revolutionary change isn't so hot. These reporters were bored by her account of US multi-nationals' involvement in Southern Africa and the role of the Rockefellers in controlling the Chase Manhattan Bank, IBM, Standard Oil, and Gulf Oil, all of whom have subsidiaries in South Africa. One man grimaced when a quiet German militant described the solidarity movement for the jailed Shrewsbury pickets. You wondered whether, like David Frost, they were still hankering after the details of her relationship with George Jackson.

Angela's refusal to compromise came through in a rasping and drawling articulacy. She sat quietly

with her box of Kleenex among the mahogany surfaces of parliamentary democracy. "I'm here to express solidarity with my black sisters and brothers. I want to do whatever I am able to do representing progressive movements in my country to assist those fighting against racism."

She was asked about repression in Uganda. "Of course there are other countries where repression exists. But it is South Africa which has the consistent support of the US government and of the ruling class in the USA. There is a need for the Pretoria-Washington axis to fall, for a new day for people who are struggling for dignity, for freedom."

3. South Africa: "I am no longer afraid"

Angela's sisters and brothers in South Africa are fighting against a system of social and economic relationships where 87% of the country - including all the principal towns, the most productive farming land and mineral resources - is reserved for whites. The rest comprises the Bantustans - about 100 pieces of land where blacks are forced to live. 50% of children in a typical Bantustan die before the age of five. Black women have to walk up to 20 miles to attend a clinic. Every year 1½ million cases of malnutrition are not treated. In the last ten years 1½ million blacks from the towns have been moved out to the Bantustans and there are plans to move another 4 million.

Because the Vorster government considers that "black workers must not be burdened with superfluous appendages like women and children", giant single-sex barracks on the edge of the cities are being built in which 11 months of the year are to be spent as labourers. The men spend the last month with their families in the Bantustans.

In the townships 7 out of 10 African families live below the Poverty Datum Line (bare subsistence). In the last ten years 6 million blacks have been arrested for offences under the Pass Laws. Women who find employment as nannies with rich whites in a city like Johannesburg will send their own children to friends in the Bantustans while their husbands stay in all-male barracks as a source of cheap labour. Foreign companies like Leyland, Renault and Datsun control 80% of private production in a country where Japanese businessmen are classified as honorary whites for economic purposes.

Many of those whose acts of resistance in the 1960s brought them to Pretoria's Palace of Justice are now on Robben Island, South Africa's maximum security prison for black political activists. Philip Kgosana, who took part in anti-Pass protests in the Cape in 1960, told

the magistrate that since Africans had no part in making the law, "it is my genuine feeling and contention that I shall not have a fair trial in this court". Benjamin Ramotse, when sentenced to fifteen years on Robben Island, declined to speak. He raised his fist in the salute of the African National Congress.

Terrance Makwabe, a former labourer who faced renewed prosecution and a longer sentence, was asked by the prosecutor why he was giving the evidence. "I am no longer afraid."

Prisoners on Robben Island "labour in the quarries or collect seaweed from the Atlantic's icy waters", wrote Mary Benson in an introduction to a pamphlet of statements from the dock. "African women political prisoners are on the mainland while Bram Fischer and the remaining white political prisoners are in Pretoria. From there, as from the Island, come reports of the men's strength of spirit, their comradeship, their belief that they are not forgotten, and their confidence that the future is theirs."

Bram Fischer, an Afrikaaner Communist and defence lawyer in the Rivonia trial of 1963-4, is now dying of cancer. Angela referred to him at the press conference. "In most countries where prisoners become ill of a fatal disease they are freed." If Vorster is so determined on change, she commented in a tone of charming irony, "this is one of the ways in which he can concretely create it".

In 1966, on trial under the Sabotage Act and the Suppression of Communism Act, Bram Fischer had risen to speak in his own defence. "I will not go into the witness box and prevaricate or lie. I cannot go into the witness box and answer questions that might implicate others. There is only one alternative... that is to make my statement from the dock." He ended it with President Kruger's words. "Whether we win or whether we die, freedom will rise in Africa, like the sun from the morning clouds."

4. Being Interviewed: Dismay, Compliance, Resilience

At the end of the press conference the superstar was surrounded by a kind of hysteria. You cadged interviews out of people by milling around. A woman from Capital Radio: "It's a pop station, you know - young kids." "Miss Davis has a full schedule... Can you all leave by the other door, please?... Miss Davis is tired." She looks just like Angela Davis looks in ten million news flashes, acquittals, solidarity stickers. But a sense of the frailty of political defiance is betrayed by her quietness, her exhaustion, her cold, the way she stoops, how thin she is.

Ericka Huggins' prison message to

an anti-war conference in Michigan in 1971, on "educating the people about all political prisoners of our war against oppression", may have given Angela the strength to withstand the personal battering to which she was subjected in these interviews:

"No heroes, no rhetoric, but massive educational rallies and street politicising. And we have to do it with love, you know, and the understanding that we need more than just movement people and sympathisers at these rallies. We need whole families of people. So we all really have to get to work and focus on the people, not individuals."

The interviews with individual newspapers, radio stations etc were held the next day at the offices of the International Defence and Aid Fund, which campaigns for the release of Southern African political prisoners. Demands had been made all morning to the point where Angela could only murmur with subdued anger and visible desperation, "This is getting like an assembly line." She experienced the alienation of the factory worker. Her specialness couldn't stop her being a commodity.

The interview for *Spare Rib*, which was to be about black women in political movements, came after Australian Broadcasting and before *Time Out*. It began after the following exchange:

Daily Express photographer in silk cravat with tele-foto lens: Just a couple of headshots, Angela.

Angela: Do I have to do anything?

Daily Express: The pipe as well - it's a new thing, you know.

Angela: Look, I've been smoking a pipe for twelve years.

"The first question was about contradictions: whether black people perceive the main political contradiction at the moment as between their people and the enemy - in terms of international capital - or whether they're concerned with looking at contradictions among the people - between men and women?"

Well, you see, if we perceive the impact of slavery on black people in the United States, and on black women in particular, it becomes very clear that from the very inception of the history of black people, black women have been forced to go out and do the very same kinds of work as black men.

I once wrote an article called *The Role of Black Women in the Community of Slaves*, and I think you can see that there was a kind of equality imposed upon black men and black women by the system of oppression which made no distinction between slaves and slaves. Black women had to go out in to the fields and pick cotton just as black men had to go out in the fields and pick cotton. Even pregnant women had to go out and

do this kind of work, difficult toil. And then, of course, with the so-called Emancipation, black women were still forced to go out and work for survival of the family and the community. And as a result of that we find that black women also played an important role in resistance, in organising slave revolts, because they could do a lot of things that black men couldn't do.

What has happened in recent years is that there has been an attempt - particularly with the emergence of the women's movement - to develop a kind of propaganda which tried to hold black women responsible for a great deal of the oppression which exists. They say that black women are domineering. We're called castrating females. In 1965 there was an attempt by Daniel Moynihan - who was one of Johnson's men - called *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. His position is that the reason for so many of the problems in the black community is because there are too many women who are heads of families.

But let's consider the reason why so many families, black families - I think 25%, or more, of black families - are headed by a woman. First of all, if you have a husband; though that husband may be unemployed, you won't receive welfare payments to guarantee that your children won't starve, so you have to tell him to leave.

There's a very good recent movie called *Claudine* - I don't know whether you've seen it over here - which shows how the welfare system tried to break up families -

Who made it? I just wondered whether it was made by radicals, in the way that *Salt of the Earth* was? Oh... (laughter)... I'm sure there are real drawbacks, problems to that movie - but it's a good expose of welfare.

Well, one of the things that we as black people have had to do in order to counteract this kind of propaganda is to fight for the legacy that black women have had handed down to us. To say that No, we want to look at those black women - Sojourner Truth, and all the other nameless black women who participated in resistance struggles. And through them to find out what it means to be a black woman. . ."

Sojourner Truth, a slave abolitionist, was born Isabella Baumfree in 1797. She changed her name because "God had given her a truth to declare", and she worked in a mixed group of black anti-slavery lecturers. A book called *Negro Makers of History*, published in 1928 in the USA, describes her as "an illiterate woman" who went with well-educated black reformers "to stir audiences with her heavy voice, quaint language, and homely

illustrations".

Something is known of Harriet Tubman also. Born in 1823 to slave parents in Maryland, she became known as the Moses of her People. The only American woman to lead troops on the battle fields throughout the Civil War, she was also one of the legendary "conductors" on the Underground Railroad, the secret bands of communities who directed fugitive slaves to free territory. There was a \$40,000 reward on her head, but she made 19 rescue trips to the South. She always carried a pistol on her freedom rides and if any slaves were reluctant to continue the journey, she drew her gun and said, "You'll be free or die".

"... And through them to find out what it means to be a black woman, and not listen to the prevailing propaganda which says that we have to be docile, and we have to be submissive, and we are responsible for the loss of manhood of black men.

But a lot of resistance has come about as a result of the acceptance

within the black movement by black men - by many men, unfortunately - of that kind of model, of telling black women to sit back and let black men to take the lead now."

In your press conference you referred consistently to "sisters and brothers". I wondered whether there was a consciousness within the black movement of the need to redefine language, to look at the ways that sexism comes through in everyday interactions?

Precisely... oh, yes, precisely. And, you see, we also feel that that's something that should not be confined only to the women's movement. It should pervade the entire struggle, it should pervade the entire society.

When we talk about struggling against racism, we have to talk about white people taking the initiative and fighting racist attitudes among other white people. Men have to understand that they have to take the initiative in fighting male supremacist attitudes among other men.

What about the trade union movement in the United States? Have there been similar discussions to the ones in the Black and Asian movements here on questions of whether racism and sexism can be fought within the unions or outside them?

I think in terms of the black movement, and the women's movement, the effect can be seen most clearly in the movement of workers. You see, workers who are organised are in unions, regardless of the fact that the leadership is class collaborationist. What we are experiencing now is a huge upsurge of the rank and file, of workers who resist the collaborationist postures of Meaney and all the rest of them - you know, the top national leadership.

There are some very interesting developments among women in unions: Union WAGE (Women's Alliance to Gain Equality), for example, and the Coalition of Labour Union Women. These are important because they wage the struggle for the emancipation of



Realities of repression: Great Meadows Correctional Facility, (Comstock Prison), New York

women in the context of the struggle for the emancipation of the working class."

800 Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican women were among the 3000 delegates to CLUW's founding conference in 1974. Sheila Rowbotham describes CLUW's formation: "In July 1973, some women trade union officials discontented with their own situation in male-dominated unions started to plan a working women's conference. They expected about 800 women to turn up. Over 3,000 enthusiastic and militant women workers appeared in Chicago in March 74. The mood was both feminist and radical... CLUW is committed to organising the unorganised and to securing improvements in women's working conditions." The conference resolved to fight racial discrimination on the job, to demand adequate child care facilities, adequate maternity benefits, and the extension of protective legislation to men.

"... These are important because they wage the struggle for the emancipation of women in the context of the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. And men workers must understand the need to fight the special discrimination against women - because if they allow that kind of discrimination to continue, then they will feel the results. It's like the situation with black workers. Wherever black workers can be exploited severely, that means there's a corresponding ability on the part of the bosses to exploit all workers.

Look, we have to leave now."

5. Black Women: Dealing with that White Policeman

Australian Broadcasting had earlier asked her about women's liberation:

You're talking about the plurality of the progressive movement, but what about the problems for you, as a revolutionary and as a woman? I mean, do you see your role as a woman as simply working for those revolutionary organisations which exist, or through a separate feminist movement?

"Let me give you an example of one of the problems with the dominant trends in the women's movement in

the United States, which tends to be almost exclusively white, and almost exclusively middle class.

Take, for example, the white middle class woman, who as a result of the gains and advances made by the women's movement, is able to go into some profession. Now, she has a family. And if she's working all day she's not going to stay in and have time to take care of her family. So, probably, if she's making enough money, she's going to hire a maid.

Now, that maid is more than likely going to be Black, or Puerto Rican. And if she cannot understand the relationship between her fight as a woman and the fight on behalf of the women who are most oppressed - namely Black women, Puerto Rican women, Indian women, working class women - she is going to contribute to the oppression of that black domestic worker, because she's going to end up paying that maid below the normal wage.

Let me give you an example of the kind of problems that can arise if one does not understand this. If you remember, a number of years ago there was a whole movement for legalised abortion in the States. Now, I was asked to sponsor a rally demanding the legalisation of abortion, and I said that I would be happy to sponsor that rally but I felt there was something missing. The issue of the involuntary sterilisation of women was not raised.

Maybe one third of young women in Puerto Rico have already been sterilised. The fact that that campaign did not say legalise abortion and an end to involuntary sterilisation together, indicated a lack of understanding of the issues which must link the women's movement to the struggle against racism. And that's one of the reasons why you don't find nearly as many black women involved in the women's movement.

I can only see the struggle for the emancipation of women as part of the struggle for freedom of all our people, because I know that when I go out on the street and I have to

deal with that white policeman, he doesn't distinguish between the fact that I'm black or I'm a woman. But, of course, there must be a movement explicitly against racism, a movement explicitly for the emancipation of women."

The Daily Express photographer began a second rampage: Can you just pose by the table?

Angela: Look, I hate posing. And we have to leave.

Daily Express: Well, just 30 seconds... (takes pictures)... Just look at me now... (grins)... I hope you're not counting those 30 seconds.

Angela (expressionless): I am.

6. Some Reflections on Getting the Message Across

Those nameless women and men described by Angela who have combined throughout history to resist exploitation will remain nameless so long as social power stalks on Wall Street and imprisons South African freedom on Robben Island. For however diligent the revolutionary movement, however persevering in its commitment to "no heroes, no rhetoric", capitalism can adopt the woman who is a symbol of resistance and attempt to re-assimilate her as a celebrity.

Thus the irony of Ericka Huggins' prison message, and of Angela's own recognition of the problem in a pre-trial statement in defence of the Soledad Brothers in 1971:

"We must be careful to avoid the tendency of building personality cults around specific individuals; this detracts from our ability to defend all our brothers and sisters - especially those whose names remain unknown - with a strong, vigorous and militant united front."

In a way, the problem is taken out of the hands of the movement.

Capitalism, via the mass media, will

select its own heroines from a movement, the black movement, whose strength has to be confronted in order to be contained. A university professor who has been acquitted on a murder charge will thus seem "safe".

There is however a hazardous moment for capitalism itself when it becomes caught in the trap it has set. David Frost's TV interview with Angela caught the essence of this contradiction when Angela used peak viewing time to get the message across. There was a war on, between two opposed ways of looking at the world. Evidently concerned solely with a narrow concept of romantic love, David Frost attempted to short-circuit the politics of the black movement by pleading with her to agree that her personal relationship with George Jackson was very special and unusually intimate. Refusing to yield to the media's dreary quest for a salacious tale, Angela chose to generalise the idea of love.

She chose to show how love of the people was as real as that between individuals, how commitment to a change in the conditions of life was essential "so that we can use all of the talents of all of the people, all the abilities of all of the people."

Ann Scott

In writing this I have found the following helpful:

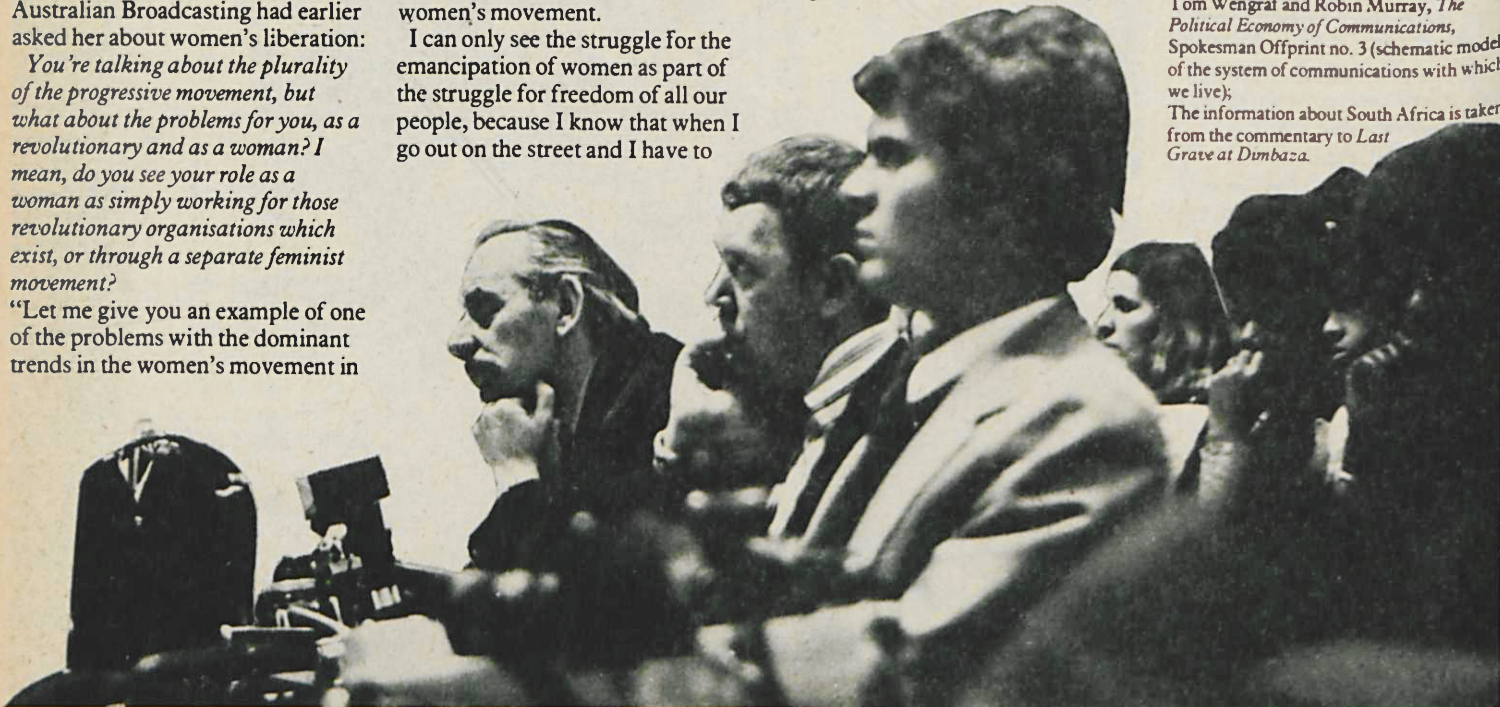
Gerda Lerner (ed), *Black Women in White America: An Anthology*, Vintage Books; Angela Davis (ed), *If they come in the morning: Voices of Resistance*, Orbach and Chambers; George Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, Penguin Books;

Mary Benson (ed), *The Sun Will Rise: Statements from the Dock by Political Prisoners in South Africa*, International Defence and Aid Fund;

Sheila Rowbotham, *Shaking up Uncle Sam* (women workers in USA), *Spare Rib* 28; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (a longish pamphlet which explores the role of the mass media, the mystifying effects of stardom etc);

Tom Wengraf and Robin Murray, *The Political Economy of Communications*, Spokesman Offprint no. 3 (schematic model of the system of communications with which we live);

The information about South Africa is taken from the commentary to *Last Grave at Dumbaza*.



Conflicting experience: journalists and audience at the rally in Friends House, London, December 12 1974, at which Angela Davis spoke about racism and imperialism

MEN'S CONFERENCE

The third national Men against Sexism conference took place on Saturday and Sunday, November 16 and 17, in London. It was advertised in *Time Out* as "mainly workshops, sexual-political theory; groups; rock music and sexism; how to build a people's movement?"

We went along apprehensive of the idea of a "people's movement" and hoped that most men there would be more interested in discussing the practical relationship between MAS and the women's movement. We had been involved in a men's consciousness-raising group for 8 months while we were at university, but had been out of touch with the groups that exist in a fairly dispersed form throughout Britain. We hoped that the conference would provide the environment in which we could discuss ideas and initiatives that had been taken by other groups.

We arrived to find chaos. It was like Victoria railway station. There was a morass of people, the one room was airless and noisy. It did not seem to be much of an advance on any other kind of conference. We wandered around with the other 200 men wondering when it was going to start and gradually realised that it wasn't going to. It became apparent that the chaos was not just a result of the room but a product of the politics of the people who organised it.

The previous conferences at Birmingham in November 1973 and at Leeds in May 1974 had been similarly organised on a loose open basis with few formal arrangements except for meals. This had functioned quite well: there had been plenty of room and suggestions for workshops. MAS was at a very exploratory stage and it served very well for people just to meet each other and talk. This was particularly true of Birmingham, which was for us the consciousness-raising event inspiring the formation of our own consciousness-raising group. The absence of any organised meeting forced us to approach each other and ask what we were there for. After a while we had gathered into little groups and talked in an informative and supportive way about masturbation and jealousy.

At Leeds there was still a lot of impetus derived from the experience of consciousness-raising groups. People wanted to discuss how these groups were being developed to create more warmth and emotional contact between men. Some gay men intervened in a friendly way to raise the question about how these objectives of straight men ought to be extended to solidarity with gay men. The straight men seemed to be receptive

and one of us at least was excited about the implications of the apparent closeness of gay relationships for our own relationships with men and recognised the necessity to defend gays.

The conference in London did not have this enthusiasm. We got the impression that a lot of consciousness-raising groups had collapsed and people did not know where to turn next. In this context the proclamation from the conference hand-out that this was to be a "self-managed" conference was fatuous. It meant in fact that no-one had taken the responsibility for structuring it: there was no timetable or suggested topics for discussion which could be put to the meeting and changed as necessary.

This problem arose in Leeds and it was agreed then that it's impossible for 200 people who do not know each other to suddenly get together and decide what they want to talk about. Another problem raised in Leeds and ignored in London was that one function of these conferences is to introduce individuals to groups. This again is impossible in an atmosphere of coldness and paranoia where there is no organisation through which to meet people. A lot of men who came on Saturday did not bother on Sunday.

This unconstructive attitude to the conference went along with views articulated by some men about where we find sexism. They said

that it was in our own heads, in the verbal categories of male and female, heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual. To use these words is to accept the terms of "masculinist culture". In order to fight sexism we have to reject the words that divide us and learn to be in harmony with each other. For men in MAS one of the difficulties is to try and understand exactly what oppression means since most of us accept the premise that in the dimension of sexual politics it is us that oppress women. So how can we as oppressors talk about oppression?

One anti-sexist strategy for getting out of this tangle provided the justification for the chaos that was all about us: just as to organise was identified as a masculine activity, then to be non-sexist the answer was *not to organise*. And similarly just as aggression is masculine then the way to be non-sexist is to always be gentle and never aggressive. The need was to get beyond these categories.

But it seemed that the conference was far from clear about even what these categories were meant to represent, let alone being on the point of transcending them. This became clear as the conference went on when these assumptions were challenged more and more angrily by some of the gay men. They said that it was obvious that we (the straight men) had no idea of what oppression meant. It wasn't to be caught in mental contortions over categories, it wasn't something that happened in people's heads. It was what happened, as they put it, "on the street". To be oppressed as a gay was to lose your job, it was to be

beaten up, abused, ostracised and rejected as alien. For men to even imply that it was all in the mind was, to the gays, in itself an oppressive and sexist position. It was the height of male arrogance.

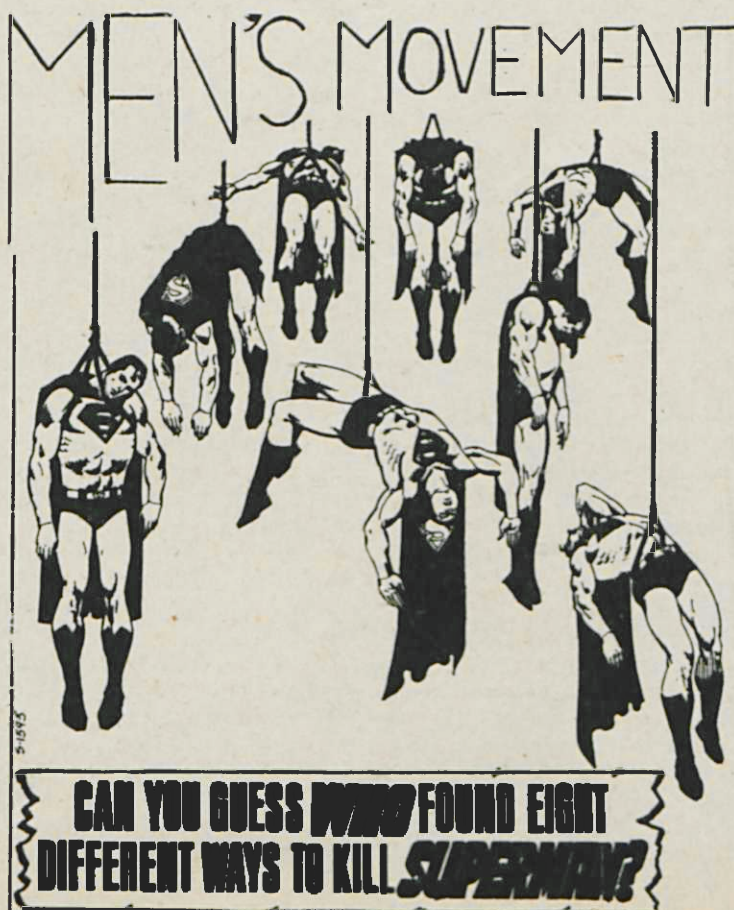
This confrontation, which is what it was, reached its height during the plenary session on Sunday morning when there were more than a hundred men there. At the best of times in a meeting of that size it is virtually impossible to create a positive and constructive atmosphere in which most people can contribute. This was no exception, and despite the earlier stress upon being warm and non-aggressive, the atmosphere was hostile and alienating. It was also described as "totally non-sexual", "non-erotic". Undoubtedly many of the people there, us included, were shaken up by the accusations made. Implicit in the gay men's criticism was the idea that we were all involved in an ultimate, although unconscious, attempt to regain male heterosexual hegemony.

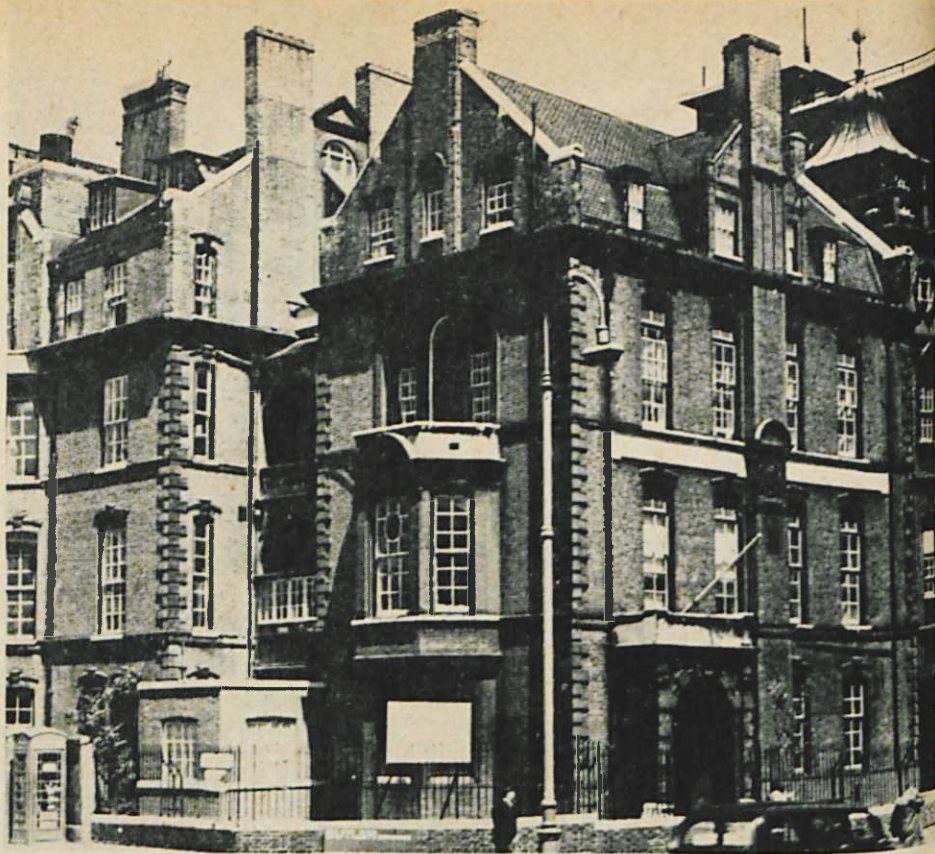
This idea seemed to be justified by the lack of consciousness of the ways in which women's liberation has confronted similar problems of how to organise. The women's movement was seen as an abstract historical precedent for MAS and not as something which was politically active now. For instance there was no discussion of the Working Women's Charter which specifically asks for the support of men. Women's liberation was seen as something that has opened up the whole area of sexual politics which, once established, was now a suitable area for men to muscle in on.

The event would have left us pessimistic and depressed about the possibilities for men contributing to the struggles around sexual politics had it not been for the health group. Women's health groups have an important role to play in giving advice about contraception and abortion, teaching women about their own bodies and attacking medical mystification. Some of the men at the conference had thought it might be possible for men to become active in these areas and to work in them together with women. There was obviously plenty to be done in attacking the assumption that women should be responsible for contraception - in pressing for a male pill and so on. There was some excitement about the idea of going into schools and talking about relationships and sexual politics to boys.

Overall, however, we were left pretty cold. Until we in MAS reject the politics that says no organisation is liberated organisation, there is no way of working out political differences and common bases both within and between MAS and the gay movement, or of working out what we can do. ■

Bernard Campbell, Dave Leon





In Touch magazine, University College Hospital

Women's Hospital Fights for its Existence

The first British hospital founded by a woman for women, and staffed by women, is fighting for its existence. The future of the 107-bed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (named after its founder, the pioneer woman doctor) in the Euston Road, London, has been questioned for years. But it is only in the last few months that the issue has come to a head following a series of decisions taken for administrative reasons without any consultation of staff or patients.

There are important principles at stake. The EGA, though small and lacking in some modern facilities, has for the past 100 years been one of the very few hospitals run by women for women. It was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's ambition to provide an institution where women could get surgical and medical treatment from members of their own sex and where women doctors could practise at a time

when there were few openings for women in the medical profession.

The Hospital still serves this purpose. It is used by many women from outside London (it was deliberately sited in Euston to give easy access to the Midlands and North) including large immigrant minority groups who, for religious and cultural reasons, can only be treated by women.

It enables married women doctors to return to medicine on a part-time basis and gives greater opportunities and responsibilities to the female staff than would be available in a male-dominated hospital. It has a high reputation for its standard of nursing and in certain fields of medicine, including family planning and the early detection and treatment of disease.

Not surprisingly the hospital staff are outraged by what is happening (they were shocked to learn about the proposed closure of their Maternity Unit in the local paper) and have hastily set about fighting further closure with an action committee. They have generated a lot of publicity in a short time and are lobbying the Houses of Parliament and the local Community Health Council.

(CHC's are newly established bodies designed to democratise the NHS.) The hospital has the wholehearted support of many GPs and women's organisations.

The crucial decision which precipitated this sudden flurry of activity came in the autumn when the General Nursing Council, an academic body, withdrew recognition for nurses' training at the EGA. The Camden and Islington Area Health Authority did not see fit to contest this. With the reorganisation of the NHS in April this year, the hospital was cut off from its training school, from which its student nurses came, and which is now in a different district of the Health Authority. This must be the real reason underlying the decision - Islington district does not want to continue paying for student nurses in a hospital outside its district.

The effect of all this is that between January and June 1975 the hospital's student nurses will be phased out and the EGA will have to rely on fully-trained and agency staff, who are a good deal more expensive to come by. These difficulties could result in the closure of the hospital.

The General Nursing Council's decision was taken without consul-

tation. The hospital only learnt about it when the duty rota arrived one day with details of student nurses being withdrawn. The GNC have since refused a meeting with the hospital staff on the grounds that this would be "unprofitable".

The reasons given for the GNC's decision were that the hospital did not provide nursing experience not available elsewhere, it was overcrowded and its facilities were below standard. No attempt was made to find out if these criticisms had been met - which they largely had - before the decision was taken.

Moreover in 1973 the GNC had approved nurses' training at the EGA and singled out the Whittington Hospital in Highgate, one of the hospitals in the EGA's training school, for criticism. The sudden reversal of approval this year may, as the EGA has stated, "have arisen from other pressures rather than from conviction on the part of the General Nursing Council itself."

Other factors have also played their part in contributing to the present crisis. The hospital has been neglected for years and there is a strong suspicion that the NHS management have pursued a deliberate policy of attrition with senior

staff vacancies remaining unfilled and the building and facilities run down.

In 1972 the EGA's pre-convallescent unit, the Rosa Morison House in Barnet, was closed. Staff and patients were given three weeks notice to quit on the grounds that the unit was needed urgently by Barnet General Hospital. Patients had to be squeezed into the main EGA building causing considerable disruption all round. Since then Rosa Morison House has remained empty.

Again there was no consultation. Moreover the previous Chairwoman of the EGA Medical Committee, Dr Mary Bateman, was specifically instructed not to consult with the rest of the staff, after she had learnt of the proposed closure.

The separation of the 35-bed Garrett Anderson Maternity Unit in Belsize Grove, Hampstead, into a different health district from the main body of the hospital has been another problem. North Camden, where the Maternity Unit lies, has just spewed forth the vast new Royal Free Hospital which has excess maternity beds. So, the argument goes, the Garrett Anderson Maternity Unit with its relatively old-fashioned building and facilities is superfluous.

The Area Health Authority have already decided that the Unit must go though they have never consulted the staff or communicated this information in writing to them. The EGA was expecting that the unit would close but not that they would lose obstetric beds altogether. When the new Royal Free's obstetric beds were ready, they hoped to see their Unit incorporated into the main hospital in Euston in place of their empty paediatric ward.

In common with other hospitals in Central London the EGA has experienced a fall in demand for paediatric beds but the General Nursing Council insisted that they retain their 20-cot ward for nurses' training, even though these beds were empty!

The closure of the Maternity Unit would result in the absurd anomaly of a women's hospital with no obstetric beds. The EGA staff state in their report to the Community Health Council: "A hospital like EGA with a large gynaecological and obstetric practice is a nonsense without maternity beds."

And closure of the Home would mean that any pregnant woman wanting treatment from a woman doctor would have to go to Harley Street. As the hospital explain, this would particularly affect Muslim and Orthodox Jewish women, who have religious and cultural objections to treatment by men.

In almost any other NHS hospital, a woman cannot be guaranteed treatment by a member of her own sex, and will usually find herself in the hands of a male doctor. A woman

can try to fight for the doctor of her choice but it's not easy, especially for say, a Muslim woman, who maybe speaks faltering English.

These arguments do not obviously convince the authorities, many of whom view the mere existence of a small, all-female hospital as cranky and impractical. They must have been relieved when the General Nursing Council virtually took the decision about the EGA's future out of their hands.

The Area Health Authority outlined their view of the EGA in a written report which suggested that the hospital was not economically viable, that it was expensive to run and beds were not always full. The EGA considered this report misleading and claimed that working costs were exaggerated and efficient service belittled.

One of the AHA's main objections to continued funding of the hospital must be that the EGA draws more than three-quarters of its patients from outside Camden and Islington. The reorganisation of the Health Service has meant that funds available to the area are calculated in terms of the local population.

So, it seems, the hospital is an irritating administrative inconvenience. It is in many ways a victim of Health Service reorganisers who took no account of the principles involved, of the need for a specialist hospital which has a wider intake than most hospitals.

And what of the future? The prospect improves as the news of the EGA's predicament spreads. But time is running out fast. In January the student nurses begin to go and then things could deteriorate rapidly.

In the longer term, some kind of link with a larger hospital would be sensible so long as the character and identity of the EGA remain intact. University College Hospital round the corner would seem an obvious choice and it might well be possible for the EGA to participate in their nurse training scheme.

As Wendy Love, a gynaecologist who chairs the hospital's Medical Committee has declared: "The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson fills an important national role... Issues of substantial public interest are involved in its future and they deserve public discussion."

The South Camden Community Health Council have grasped the issues involved and, in what may be a test case for CHC's, have called for the AHA to consult immediately with hospital staff. They have also recommended the continuance of the EGA's service with national funding■

** This article was written in mid-December. It is just possible that by the time it appears a decision could have been taken to scrap or keep the hospital.*

Lucy Hodges

ABORTION ACT AMENDMENT?

On February 7 1975 the most serious attempt yet is being made to destroy the 1967 Abortion Act. On that day James White, a middle aged car dealer, now Labour (and TGWU) MP for Glasgow Pollok, will seek to obtain a Second Reading for his Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

His overall aim is to return to the pre-1967 situation when legal abortion was obtainable only on narrow and extreme medical indications. In those days, middle class women obtained their abortions illegally and therefore expensively in Harley Street, while working class women obtained them dangerously and more cheaply in the backstreets.

In press interviews White has spoken of his hopes of excluding foreign patients, restricting the time limit up to which abortion is permitted, excluding social effects on health, and, if possible, even restricting the mental health grounds.

At a time when the Labour Party is supporting anti-discrimination legislation, White's endeavours are breathtaking in their effrontery. How many Labour Party and trade union women who voted for White—who describes himself as "an active trade unionist for 38 years"—know how he intends to abuse their confidence and restrict their freedom?

James White has not previously shown any interest in this subject. But he has been subjected to a systematic letter writing campaign by the Catholics in his constituency over several months. The Scottish Nationalist Party made inroads on the Scottish Labour vote during the last general election. White needs to conserve his vote.

Jeremy Bray MP used to support abortion law reform. He is a Methodist lay preacher and Methodists have a good record on this issue. But now he too represents a Scottish Catholic seat. So he is a sponsor of White's bill. He admits that if the bill passes there will be many more mothers with unwanted babies. He has appealed to his constituents to write and tell him how they think these women could best be helped!

It may be White's bill in name. But it is Leo Abse who is running the show and in charge of the drafting. He has pledged himself to destroy this social reform. Tory MP Jill Knight supports him on the 'sanctity of life' platform in such time as she can spare from her duties with the parliamentary hanging lobby.

Another disturbing feature of the scene, about which the press has maintained a discreet silence, is that the Labour Chief Whip,

Robert Mellish MP, is a committed Roman Catholic with a long anti-abortion record. By coincidence, four of the junior whips are Roman Catholics too. They wield enormous backstairs influence on the progress of private members' legislation.

The Facts

* Abortions in England and Wales have remained virtually unchanged since 1972 (at around 110,000).

* Scottish abortions have actually fallen from 7,500 to 7,000 between 1973 and 1974.

* The biggest increase on foreign abortions is from Catholic Ireland. 17 per cent more women came here from Eire in 1974 than in 1973.

* Prosecutions for illegal abortions fell from 57 in 1969 to only 8 in 1973 — an all time low.

* Abortion deaths have also reached an all time low. There were only 12 in 1973. If Mr White has his way, the back street abortionist will be back in business, and deaths will rise to between 50 and 60 a year, as they were in the decade before reform.

Action Now

Half the electors are women. Only 14 per cent are Catholics. The Labour Party needs to be shown that it will lose more votes than it will gain by Mr White's enterprise. The Catholics have organised their minority vote to make it effective.

Women have not yet organised their equal vote. They have between now and February 7 to do this, or White's bill will receive its Second Reading and will be on its way to becoming law. How ironic that this might happen just as the French, Germans and Austrians are following our example and reforming their abortion laws.

Since 1968 more than 600,000 British women have used the Abortion Act to obtain legal and safe abortions, instead of illegal and dangerous ones. If one tenth of them wrote to their MPs at the House of Commons to protest about this disgraceful bill, it would not stand the slightest chance of passing.

Write now to your MP, asking him or her to be present in the House of Commons on February 7 to vote against White's bill. Additionally, ask for a ticket so that you can sit in the public gallery and watch them vote against it!

For further information please ring Sally Hesmondhalgh: 278 4575■

Liz Warren



Yashin Mersich

NEWS LETTERS

Claimants Unions

Dear Spare Rib,
At the National Federation of Claimants Unions national conference in Manchester (5-7 Dec) we agreed to launch a national campaign for higher Supplementary Benefits, focussing on the following demands:

- 1) Higher Benefit rates
- 2) No deduction of family allowances from benefits
- 3) Long term addition to all claimants after 6 months.

The campaign will get under way in the new year. Help in spreading the news about it would be very welcome - with lots of women in and out of the movement living on Social Security, the basic issue of not being able to live on the money we get affects lots of us directly. Hopefully it is a demand around which other women in the movement might be prepared to work as well.

Action planned so far includes:- national poster and sticker campaign; simultaneous picketing of SS offices; local demonstrations.

More information on the campaign, or on anything connected with the national CU movement from:

Handsworth CU,
Tel. 021-554-2080.

All the best,
Jenny Lynn,
for Swansea CU

Injunction kits

Dear Spare Rib,
I noted with some interest the article on the Injunction Kit for Battered Wives, in your November issue.

In that article, you state "Many Solicitors will not do Injunction work because it is, frankly, unprofitable," and go on to say that "the cash rewards to Solicitors and the amount of effort involved, does not warrant their taking on the case".

Might I say that in fact, you will find the complete opposite is true. Many Solicitors are in fact only too willing to take on battered wives cases, particularly legally aided ones because first, there is usually very little difficulty in getting Emergency Legal Aid; secondly because battered wives' Injunctions are always tied up with Divorce Petitions and subsequent proceedings which most of the Profession handle in any event, and thirdly, because the Solicitors are properly rewarded out of the Legal Aid Fund, for the work they do.

I have done a considerable amount of work for Neighbourhood Law Centres and in my capacity as a Committee Member of a Local Law Society; and although, in certain areas, such as Landlord and Tenant disputes, Housing repairs, and other aspects of Welfare Law, many

Solicitors are not willing to act, nevertheless, in the matrimonial field, you will find that there is no shortage of Solicitors in private practice, ready and willing to help battered wives. Indeed, if you enquire of all the Neighbourhood Law Centres in London, you will find that almost none of them deal with matrimonial cases because they all readily admit that there are plenty of Solicitors in private practice, available to deal with them.

With regard to the so called "Do It Yourself Injunction Kit" I would say that I have dealt with several cases where wives have attempted to obtain their own Injunctions or Decrees Nisi, when they have 'come unstuck' with the legal technicalities.

Whilst I agree that relief for battered wives should be available and immediate, nevertheless, I would suggest that proposed Petitioners think twice before attempting to tackle the legal intricacies themselves.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen M. Gerlis,
London W6.

Ann works with Media Plus, Inc., a multi media educational programme, which has recently brought out The Silenced Majority: A Women's Liberation Multimedia Kit. It outlines women's struggle in America through history, and uses a variety of graphic techniques: photos, collage, cartoons, comic strips, ads. Media Plus, Inc., 60 Riverside Drive, Suite 11D, New York, New York 10024.

The ad to which Ann refers was used as an illustration to a report by Kathy Hersch of the World Council of Churches conference on sexism, held in June 1974.



Working on the Fifth Demand

A conference to discuss the demand for legal and financial independence for women was held in London on December 7th. The conference was called by a group which has been working on the demand for several months, and presented a paper about it at the Edinburgh women's liberation conference in June 1974 (*Spare Rib* 27).

As the areas covered by the demand are so diverse - from supplementary benefits to legal rights - it was felt that there was a need to talk to non-feminist groups working on these things, and find out how we could work with them on these issues and how we could organise separately as women.

In the first open session there were speakers from the Child Poverty Action Group, NCCL, Mothers In Action, Gingerbread, NUS, and the Claimants Union. A member of the planning group opened the conference by explaining why it was necessary for the women's movement to organise a separate campaign. The work being done at present by these pressure groups is concerned to maximise the benefits women can obtain under existing laws, and also to bring about alterations in the laws. WL groups could work with them in this framework, but it is important for us also to have an analysis of the way the state upholds the family through laws such as these, and in the long run to pose alternatives to an institution which clearly perpetuates the dependent position of Women.

Ruth Lister talked about the areas that the CPAG is involved in: campaigning against the inadequacy of Supplementary Benefit. Supplementary Benefit affects particularly women, single mothers and women pensioners whose earnings records are not enough to keep their pensions above the poverty line. She felt that it was important that women should get more out of Supplementary Benefit, but a means tested system wasn't one which readily afforded opportunities for independence. She went over all the harassments of supplementary benefits, e.g. the cohabitation rule, and suggested larger Family Allowances with an allowance for the first child

FRANKFURT — Burying Differences

The International Women's Conference held in Frankfurt am Main, West Germany, on November 15 - 17, 1974, brought together more than five hundred women from fourteen different countries including the United States, Australia and New Zealand, to discuss strategy for 1975 - the year designated by the United Nations as 'Women's Year'.

The conference, which was closed to men, was the scene of concentrated discussion and exchange of ideas between women of different nationalities whose normal channel of communication is the written word.

The atmosphere of the conference was one of noticeable harmony. The women, whose ages ranged from twenty to sixty and who belonged to many different types of women's groups, affirmed at the beginning of the conference their desire to bury differences and unite under one banner.

Work groups dealing with sexist discrimination at the level of the law, wages for housework, medicine for women, feminist studies, media and women, the situation of mothers, and lesbian politics were formed to discuss and criticise ideas for action before presenting them to the final assembly for approval.

A number of resolutions were passed by the general assembly. Among them were resolutions demanding the release of all women and children from Chilean prisons; demanding the release of the Brazilian woman Inez Romeo from prison, declaring the conference's solidarity with the struggles of Third World women and recognising that love and solidarity between women is central to the women's movement.

The conference was divided over whether to recognise 1975 as women's year. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to the UN Secretary General Mr. Waldheim saying that although women's year is a fact, the conference rejects the UN effort to take over the women's movement and asks what the UN hopes to achieve for women when it is unwilling to challenge the contradictions inherent in women's current role.

The letter also suggests that a year be designated 'Men's Year' for the purpose of aiding men in taking up child care responsibilities and recognising homosexuality, among other points.

It was decided that men should not be permitted to attend the press conference after the final assembly. This was seen as a way to minimize the possibility of biased press coverage, as well as a positive way in which women in media could be helped in their struggle to attain equality in their profession. This

decision is likely to set the tune for women's actions during 1975. For women in media as well as for the women's movement as a whole this could have far reaching effects.

A committee was set up to arrange the proposed International Trial for Crimes Against Women to be held during 1975. Suggestions for possible cases should be sent to Naureen Giroux, c/o Cofei room 606, 33 Av. des Champs Elysées, Paris, France.

The conference determined that restricted abortion and forced sterilization should be abolished. Abortion should be performed at all public hospitals without charge, by doctors trained in the vacuum aspiration method and with cervical instead of general anesthesia. Abortion should be the decision of the individual woman.

Motherhood was recognised as a problem affecting all women, not only mothers. The fight for socialised education under the control of women, new forms of architecture, paid child-bearing leave etc. were seen as central to the women's movement.

Most women left the conference with a positive feeling of achievement and with their determination to continue their struggle for equality strengthened, knowing that they are supported in their efforts by women throughout the world. □

Elizabeth Gordon

as an alternative to supplementary benefit.

Shirley Frost then spoke for Mothers in Action, and Jenny Brown for Gingerbread. Both groups are concerned with the problems of single parents, the majority of whom are women. They are both pressing the government to do something about the recent Finer report, which recommended a Guaranteed Maintenance Allowance for single parents. The GMA might not be an ideal solution, but it would certainly be preferable to present reliance on supplementary benefit. The government seems reluctant to consider it, so Gingerbread has formed a Finer joint action committee, which is preparing an extensive lobby of MPs.

Ruth Lister also spoke about the work of the NCCL. The women's rights committee worked in detail on the Tory anti-discrimination bill, and has drawn up a model bill. However, there are strong objections to any legislation of this kind, as it would be virtually unenforceable. Pressure will be needed to ensure that it is not as full of pitfalls as the Equal Pay Act.

Sue Beardon from NUS described the obstacles that face married women students under the present grants system. At the moment they get £150 less than single people or married men. Women are having to give up courses because they can't

afford it. The proposed cutbacks in educational expenditure are going to hit facilities nurseries first; they are also going to affect teacher training colleges, where the majority of students are women. Present provision for married women students discriminates not only against those who are already studying but also against those who might want to become students.

Carol Parriss, speaking for the Claimants Union, said that the tactics of this group were different from those of the other groups represented at the conference. The Claimants Union mistrusts pressurising tactics because it considers that the welfare state is a total myth, and provides no opportunity for women who are receiving benefits to be at all independent. The state has a vested interest in maintaining the family, and so militancy is necessary to bring about real change. The welfare state will have to be abolished and re-established.

Then we discussed approaches to the demand; whether or not local women's groups could act around it. Most people agreed that there was a specific role for a women's movement campaign in this area. We can work with non-feminist groups to a certain extent, but there is a feminist analysis which only the women's movement can provide.

It was agreed to try and organise campaigns on a national level, and to

this end to set up a core group whose task would be to collect and distribute information, research into possible campaigns, do educational work, etc. What is needed now is a list of campaign priorities - one which was suggested was pensions. For further information, contact Leo Wilson, 21 Castle St, High Wycombe, or ring 01 671 2779. □

Oxford Women's Liberation

Women's Rights in Wales

A Women's Rights Committee has been set up in Wales to act as an information source and pressure group concerned with Anti-Discrimination, Equal Pay, the Working Women's Charter, and childcare facilities.

Thirty delegates from the recent Women at Work in Wales Conference met in Cardiff in December with International Women's Year 1975 in mind.

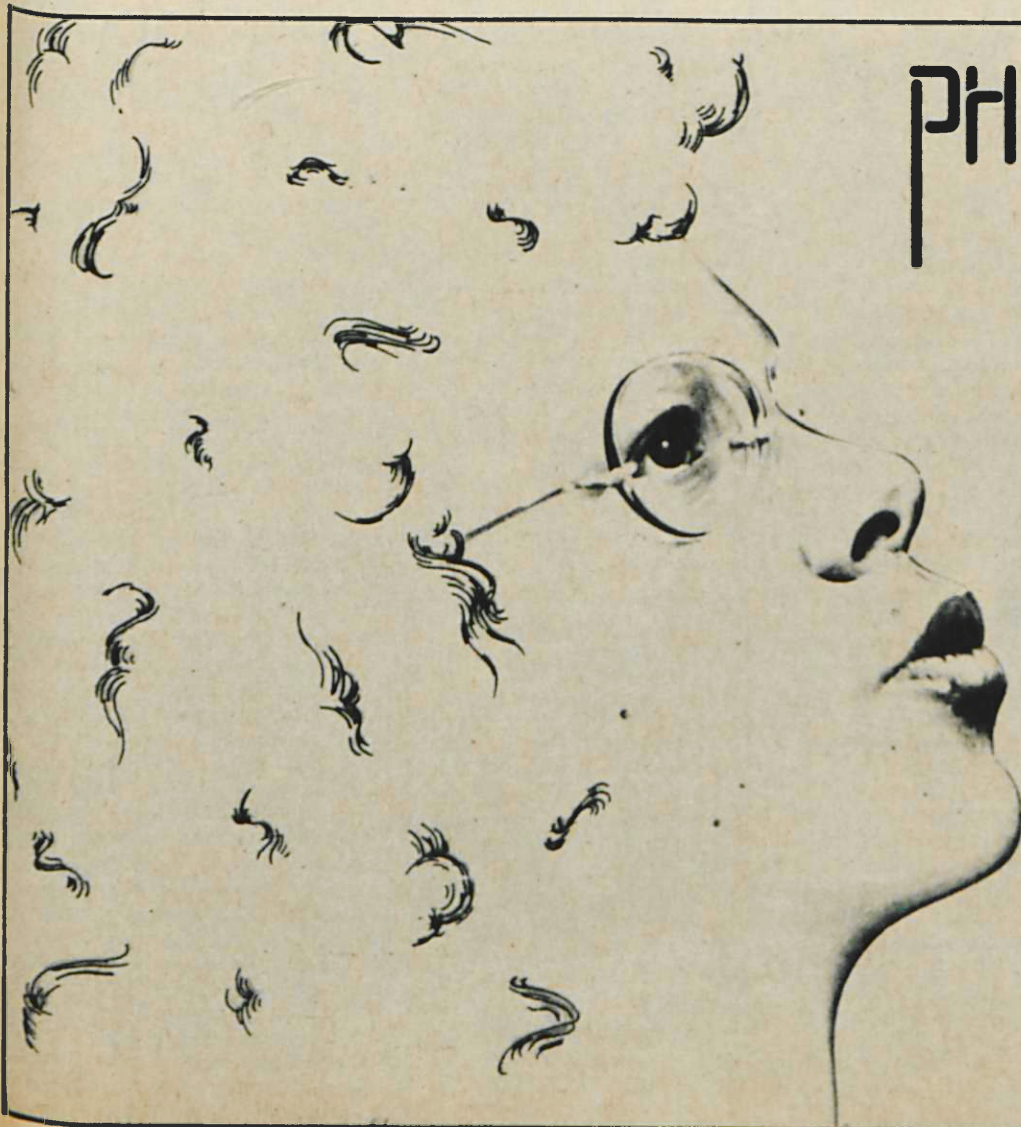
The Committee hopes to establish contacts not only with individuals but also with all sorts of organisa-

tions in which women are involved, for example trades unions, trades councils, women's institutes, mothers' groups, women's church groups etc. "No organisation in which women are involved will be excluded. The Committee is also prepared to lobby MPs and Councillors."

A network of local liaison "officers" throughout Wales is to be set up, to provide information about local difficulties and successes. The information will be collated and disseminated as widely as possible - particularly among the 200 men and women who attended the original Women at Work in Wales conference last autumn - and on this basis decisions can be made about the best method of giving help, if requested, in cases of local difficulty.

The Committee will organise day schools as a way of familiarising people with the contents of any Anti-Discrimination Act and with the workings of Industrial Tribunals set up to deal with specific cases of discrimination. "The Act protects men as well as women and the Committee is concerned to ensure that this is in no way neglected or forgotten." □

Anyone interested in the work of the Committee can contact it through Ms O. Hartnett, 15 Lochaber Street, Roath, Cardiff, tel: 42254.



PHOEBE SNOW

Phoebe is a 22 year old New Jersey girl who took up guitar seven years ago. She got started via the Greenwich Village pass-the-hat folkie clubs, performing her own songs. She was discovered there by Shelter promotion man Dino Airali, who ultimately produced her debut album. Simply called "Phoebe Snow" this record is currently in the American top 20 album chart, and her unique vocal style has been receiving plenty of favourable comment. Her album is now released in the UK on A&M Records and tapes AMLS 68283.

NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR AWARD
ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE



SHORTLIST

compiled by Ann Scott
Feel free to send any information
to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9
Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS

publications



Marriage Shrew

Intimacy, irony, optimism, desperation, anxiety, aphorism, trouble and strife do democratic battle in *Marriage Shrew* (Autumn 1974). "This does not set out to be a legal or comprehensive guide. Members and friends of the Hammersmith Group, aged 18-52, give their personal views on marriage."

You may be provoked, or disconcerted, or bored. Your relationship to your nylons may change: "I found a like-minded school friend, and together we swore that we'd never marry, and that we'd never wear nylon stockings; I think we had the idea that if we avoided the latter, the threat of marriage would be lessened."

15p plus postage from Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham Street, London WC2, tel: 01-836 6081.

Street Research Bulletin

Street Research is a "working magazine", putting forward ideas and information of direct practical use to groups and individuals active on a wide range of political issues." A regular quarterly, there are plans to cover equal pay, the politics of transport, producing your own newspaper, organising food co-ops, and more.

One year's subscription £1 (4 issues), 365 Kennington Road, London SE11, tel: 01-735 2612.

Review of African Political Economy

A social and economic complement to any study of African women, eg that provided in *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, this new journal's task "will be to examine the roots of Africa's current situation. Why is Africa's productive potential not realised? Why are most of its people still poor?" The first issue contains articles on African Peasants and Revolution, Famine as Good Business, notes on Portugal and the Lisbon Coup. Friends of Jean Gardiner's Economics glossaries would also appreciate the Guide to Terminology. "In spite of our request to contributors to write in non-academic language, it is not always possible for them to do so. An ongoing feature of this Review will therefore be a section which attempts to de-mystify the jargon."

Subscriptions £1.50 per year (3 copies) from Merlin Press, Suffrage Wharf, 2-4 Westferry Road, London E14. Individual copies 75p.

Women and Work: A Statistical Survey

The Department of Employment has recently brought out a useful booklet of statistics called *Women and Work*. It provides a summary of mostly current information on women's economic status, the industries and occupations

women work in, their hours and earnings etc, and includes comparisons, where relevant, with comparable information for men.

The statistics provided are not new, being brought together from a range of official publications. The booklet will therefore be most useful for people who wish to find out what information is already available. Unfortunately it provides very few statistics going back before 1961. For example information on historical changes in the industrial pattern of women's employment is not given.

Although the text is written for a non-specialist audience it must be of limited usefulness to general readers. This is because it deliberately presents the facts without indicating ways in which they can be interpreted. For example we are told that women's employment is highly concentrated in a few industries, mainly services, whilst men's employment is spread much more evenly throughout all industries. But the reader is left to think for herself of the different explanations and implications of this.

Women and Work: A Statistical Survey, Department of Employment Manpower Paper no. 9, London HMSO 1974, £1.50p.

Jean Gardiner

Brief Mentions

Consultant Gynaecologists and Birth Control, by Marjorie Waite, 30p from the Institute for Social Studies in Medical Care. This short (16 pages) pamphlet aims to "construct a profile of the consultant who is likely to be most interested and active in giving birth control help. He is under 45, agnostic or atheist, and works at a teaching hospital. . . He is quite likely to be in favour of abortion 'on request'."

From Birth Control Trust, 27-35 Mortimer Street, London W1A 4QW.

The Women's Movement in China, A Selection of Readings 1949-1973, Elizabeth Croll, 60p from the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, 152 Camden High Street, London NW1 ONE, tel: 01-485 8241.

The book explores the reasons why the Chinese say: "Without self-awareness, a woman may be unwilling to fly though the sky is high."

Do-it-yourself DIVORCE from £12

Written in lay terms "Divorce Without a Solicitor" tells you all you need to know about current laws and procedures in England and Wales. Indexed for easy reference, the 130 pages contain all necessary forms and guidance. Can easily save its cost a dozen times. Send £3 (incl. of p&tp) to

Millstream Publications (SR) Ltd., Mill Lane, Burley, Ringwood, Hants.

Sex Discrimination in the EEC

The Status of Women Committee has prepared a report of its one day conference on sex discrimination in the Common Market held in May 1974 (*Spare Rib* 25).

The Committee "seeks the support of all citizens of the UK who have a concern for human rights in its campaign for full equality for women. It is non-political and is composed of 28 of the leading women's organisations in Britain." It was established in 1945, replacing the British Status of Women Committee which had been formed in 1935 to report to the League of Nations on the "civil and political status of women."

From the report it emerges that the conference came to parliamentary conclusions and encouraged participant organisations to send "a message of support to the Royal College of Nursing in their struggle for better conditions for nurses". (See Rosalind Delmar, *Nurses Strike, Red Rag No. 7* for an account of the role of the RCN and the trade unions). Within this framework, however (which is certainly not a non-political one), there is much useful information about the position of women. Particularly helpful is a short section on Catholicism and education in the Republic of Ireland.

Copies are available at 50p from 44 Westminster Gardens, Marsham Street, London SW1P 4JG, tel: 01-219 5119.

arts

Women's Workshop of the Artists Union

The article in issue no. 29 on the Women's Workshop of the Artists Union omitted to mention that the Workshop is open to members of the Union. General meetings for new members are held periodically. For further details contact: The Convenor, Women's Workshop of the Artists Union, c/o ICA, The Mall, London SW1.

Soubrettes

Julia Maclean and Gill Brailey are performing a two-woman show in which two actresses explore the jealousy and competitiveness they feel towards each other through the dressing room situation.

Mercury Theatre, Notting Hill, London, February 4-16.

Female Transport by Steve Gooch, Pluto Press, 75p

The seven women being transported to Botany Bay in a convict ship, presumably in the early 19th century, were available for the men on the ship to use and abuse. Not that they had not been used and abused all their lives; in the brief stories behind their convictions we hear of their struggle to survive in 19th century England. But the particular vulnerability of women as the victims of brutality and inhumanity, the total powerlessness of their situation, is apparent throughout the play. The women survive the journey, with the exception of the suicide of one who never identifies herself with the other women. They survive only through their growing realisation that they must survive together, identifying themselves together against their jailers - "only one side in 'ere, fella," one woman tells the young jailer who's screwing her.

As in all oppressive power relations, the men have attempted to control the women by dividing them, sadistically punishing the one who stands up to them, screwing the one they fancy, bribing another with the promise of earlier release from her outrageous fate etc. But the women, though tempted, see their strength in their own solidarity, relentlessly taunting and teasing their jailers - "Ain't none of us is nice now." "Know where we stand though, no misunderstandings." They survive, to meet the new hell of penal Australia, where the women convicts faced enforced prostitution.

Despite its brutal setting, this play is worth reading. I don't know whether it would be difficult to perform. There is little action in it. It would at least provide parts for many women actors. Few plays do.

Lynne Segal

Recreation Ground

Recreation Ground is a professional, socialist, co-operative theatre group subsidised by the Arts Council of Great Britain and Camden Council.

They now have two plays in their repertoire, both written by the group: "Seeing Red: Sue, a middle class woman, is married to a wealthy capitalist. She finds her marriage and the circumstances of her life unsatisfactory. The play tells how she sets about solving her problems. This is not a Women's Lib play, it relates the women's issue to the whole class struggle in society. Barbara: (provisional title) Barbara, a young factory worker, goes on an anti-fascist demonstration because she hates racism, and finds herself in trouble with the police. Her lively rebellious response to this and subsequent experiences lead her to discover the full significance of fascism, and that the only way to fight it is to unite with others in changing society."

They usually charge a fee of £35 for *Seeing Red* and £55 for *Barbara*. If you would like the group, which is made up of actors, directors, designers and technicians, to perform either of the plays, please telephone Maureen Simpson, at 01-722 7334 10am-6pm Mon-Fri.

events

One Day Workshops in London

Following last year's series of one day workshops - held as a result of the 1973 Women and Socialism Conference - a second series has begun for 1975. We have planned the first few but would welcome ideas from women's groups who want a forum for putting over information, discussing practical and/or theoretical issues that seem particularly important now.

The first one was on January 18th on Chile. The second is on February 22nd to discuss women in caring roles (see *Spare Rib* 31, What happens in Special Education? pp17-18). A third is planned for March to discuss Ireland. Other ideas include women and psychiatry, and Sir Keith Joseph.

The venue will probably be the North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road, London N7 (Holloway Road or Highbury and Islington tube), but please contact Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham Street, London WC2, tel. 01-836 6081, for further information and suggestions.

Perspectives for Building the Women's Liberation Movement as a Mass Movement

A national conference on this subject will be held on March 22nd-23rd at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1. Details and registration form now available from Anne Fainder, 2 Cobs Cottage, Bishop Sutton, Airedale, Hants.

films



Last Grave at Dimbaza

A mutilated version of this film, which was shot in secret and is about apartheid in South Africa, was shown on BBC TV last December amidst much controversy. The BBC demanded that *Last Grave* be shown with a studio discussion following a specially prepared government film purporting to show how "there are still some slums in the black areas, and in the white areas - as in all countries", how "the lower cost of living in South Africa is often ignored when people say the wage rate should be raised", how the 19th century missionaries "brought scientific medicine to the dark continent."

Last Grave is about the articulation of class, race and sex exploitation. Its visual delicacy combines with African rhythms of drums, guitar and flute to haunt you. A country whose standard of living is the highest in the world houses its blacks in single sex barracks.

Unabridged version available from Morena Films, 607a Grand Buildings, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5HN, tel: 01-839 1907.

Hell Girl House

This short film made by the women's workshop in the National Film School draws a parallel between horror movies, fashion and make-up.

Arnolfini Cinema, Bristol, January 28th-February 1st.

Jane

A film by Susanna Allan in which past and present, memory and fantasy, merge on a Greyhound bus. Arnolfini Cinema, Bristol, February.

agit prop

Conference of Gay Working People

Preparations are now in hand for the first conference of gay working people to be held in Leeds some time in March. This conference will be the first of its kind.

Homosexual workers are often in an unenviable position. Sexual discrimination at work not only affects

all women but particularly affects homosexual workers both women and men. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the exclusion of homosexuals from some fields of employment. Gay teachers for instance live in constant fear of exposure and victimisation. The right of access to employment is a basic right. Still however employment is often obtained on the basis of belonging to one or the other sex. A whole section of the working class is permanently excluded from certain fields of employment. In other fields promotion is systematically denied and other petty tyrannies practised.

Enquiries should be sent to: Conference of Gay Working People, c/o Martin O'Leary, 32 Hartley Grove, Leeds 6.

Troops Out Movement

The Troops Out Movement, whose demonstration on October 27th 1974 - to demand that Labour immediately implement a political and military withdrawal from Ireland - was supported by many women's organizations, still needs to collect £184 to cover its costs.

"The collection taken at this demonstration should easily have covered the costs of the organising. However, during the collection speech scuffling provided the police with an excuse to move into the crowd and as a result of a shortened collection only £114 was raised. The total cost of organising the demonstration was £424."

All participating groups have been asked to "at least double their contributions." Send cheques or postal orders (crossed) payable to Troops Out Movement Number 2 Account, to Bill Freeman, 28 Lammas Park Road, London W5.

Libertarian Women's Network Newsheet

Dear Spare Rib, I would like to contact anyone who would like to see the Libertarian Women's Network Newsheet again. In case everyone has forgotten or never heard of it, it ran for about two years and seems to have got stuck somewhere in early 1973. Previously it appeared about every six weeks or so and contained discussion and reports on practical experience, activity, news, theoretical articles etc, by libertarian women. Alison Malet, 1 Lynnewood Place, Dundee, Angus.

Battered Wives and Citizens' Advice Bureaux

The CABs would like to emphasise that they give help to battered wives. Ruth Holt, the solicitor at Paddington Neighbourhood Law Centre who compiled a Do-It-Yourself Injunction Kit for Battered Wives (*Spare Rib* 30, p.20), received this letter from a local CAB organizer after her appearance on TV to talk about the kit:

"I was somewhat surprised, when Bob Wellings commented that it might be difficult for a distraught wife to fill in the forms, that no mention was made of the fact that any CAB would be more than willing to do this for her. Also that the CAB would arrange for someone to accompany her to Court, if she felt she would like a little moral support."

The Injunction Kit is available at 25p from Ruth Holt, 465 Harrow Road, London W10.

Back Issues

No. 5 - Family Everafter - Micheline Wandor on the family structure. . .

No. 6 - What the Revolution has done for women in Cuba . . . Epidurals. . .

No. 8 - John Bergers unpublished notes for G . . . Abortion, all the facts. . .

No. 9 - Women in China . . . Spare Parts on laying floor boards and tiles. . .

No. 10 - Tanya, the only woman who fought with Che Guevara . . . Bisexuality. . .

No. 11 - Equal Pay, what the Hell's going on? . . . How we rolled the Stones. . .

No. 12 - Sylvia Plath, unknown short story . . . 'Woman and Madness'. . .

No. 13 - Why did women become Nazis . . . Do-it-yourself divorce. . .

No. 14 - Are children loved enough, too little or too much - maternal deprivation reassessed. . .

No. 15 - How do you cope with jealousy . . . The new women's studies courses. . .

No. 16 - Jane Fonda interview . . . Karate . . . Self help therapy. . .

No. 18 - How the female religion was stamped out . . . Choosing the right analyst . . . sex shops. . .

No. 19 - 'Down Among The Women' Fay Weldon's novel . . . Vaginal Politics. . .

No. 20 - List of Women's Centre . . . film about women's vaginas . . . Illiteracy - whose problem?

No. 24 - Non-sexist kids book . . . Wedlocked women . . . premenstrual tension. . .

No. 26 - History of the Housewife . . . Being a woman doctor . . . Women militants in 'Portuguese' Africa. . .

No. 27 - Mountain Women Blues . . . Working Women's Charter . . . Schizophrenia. . .

No. 28 - Why women starve themselves . . . Talking to Policewomen . . . Bridget St John interviewed. . .

No.29-Contraceptive Con . . . Women workers . . . Sex and self hate

No.30-Baby sling offer . . . Hysterectomy . . . Consciousness raising

No.31-Equal pay at SEI . . . Self help groups . . . History of women in music

Please circle the numbers that you want and send 35p each (postage and packing included) to Spare Ribs Ltd, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

name

address

GLOBE LANTERNS

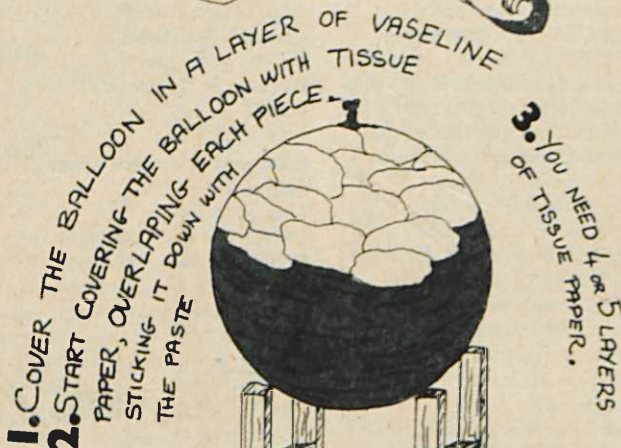
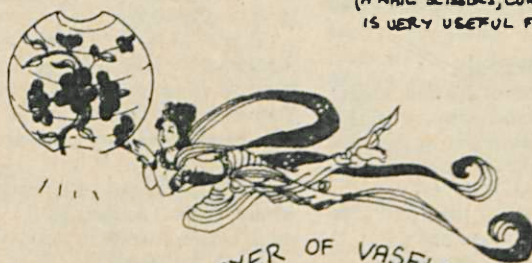
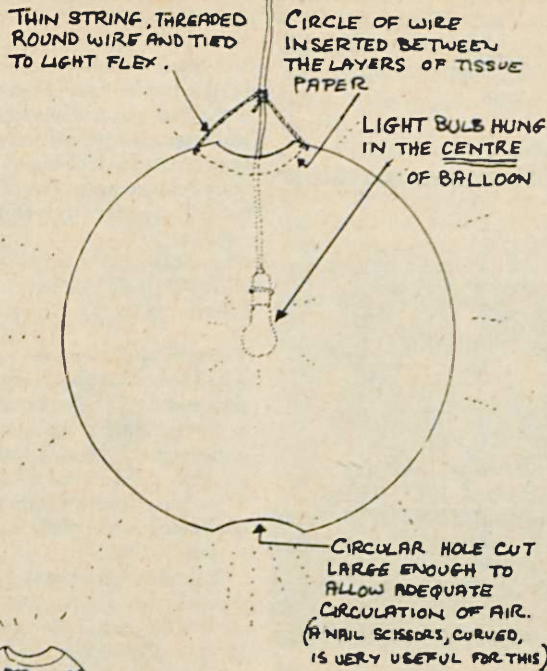
WHAT YOU NEED:

- A LARGE balloon : 24 to 30 inches.
- Tissue paper, white and coloured.
- Vaseline
- Wallpaper paste, POLYCELL
- Wire and string
- Scissors and wide paint brush.

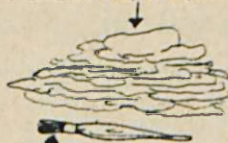
WHAT YOU DO:

1. Blow up the balloon to size of lampshade you want.
2. Rest it on upturned stool and cover with thin layer of vaseline.
3. Cut or tear up a lot of white tissue pieces and paste them all over balloon, overlapping them as you go. Insert your circle of wire. (flower wire or doubled fuse wire bent into a circle of 9/10 inches diameter) It should go on after your 2nd layer of tissue.
4. Cover balloon in 4 to 5 layers. Try not to get it too soggy.
5. Leave to dry, about 24hrs.
6. Let balloon down, DON'T POP IT, as you can use it again.
7. Cut circular hole top and bottom, large enough to allow adequate circulation of air. Don't cut too close to wire at the top.
8. Attach your thin string round the wire at top of balloon and tie the ends round your light flex, allowing your bulb to drop to the centre of the lampshade

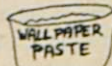
AND THEN SWITCH ON..



HEAP OF TORN/CUT
PIECES OF TISSUE PAPER.



BRUSH FOR APPLYING PASTE
OR, USE YOUR HANDS....



THE VARIATIONS

are endless.....

COLOURED

Five layers of coloured tissue makes a very sombre lampshade.. so, start with white then use the coloured only on last two layers. Of course, once you start thinking about it, the overlaps will make patterns and different colours themselves..so you start getting very interesting shapes and movement depending on the shape of your tissue pieces and their colour..

between the layers

YOU CAN ALSO INSERT THINGS BETWEEN THE LAYERS.

Like pressed flowers, leaves, shapes cut out of opaque paper, or fine materials...

Amazing pictures can be built up, either on the outside, or hidden between the layers so you have a fine white globe when its off but when you switch it on..wow..CANE.

If you like the lantern type shades you get in the shops, you can insert thin weaving cane between the layers. Soak it till its pliable then spiral it round the balloon. You might need more than two hands, so get a friend to help hold it down while you paste over it. 4 layers is OK.

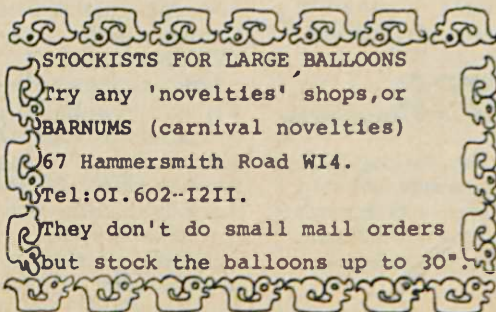
or

you can make half ones.. To keep the shape you will need a piece of cane or wire round the bottom with tissue folded round it to hold it in..then you could hang festoons of beads or tassels round the edge...



or maybe

they needn't become lampshades at all. By using stiffer paper (newsprint) and more layers they can become great masks or head-dresses, painted and decorated after you have made the globe and taken the balloon out. Or you could paint a map of the world and arrange the stars round it on little wires... or you could...



THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Zoe Fairbairns sifts the media for the last time...

This will be the last Ones That Got Away; so instead of presenting yet another catalogue of journalistic sexism, I would like to offer a few general reflections on the subject.

Sheila Rowbotham, looking at woman's place in male-dominated politics, has reflected that "we come on the agenda somewhere between 'youth' and 'any other business.'" To extend the metaphor into male-dominated language (particularly journalistic language) I would suggest here our place is also firmly established - between a pair of brackets.

There, but not there: the details, the optional extras. Job advertisements are countless which begin: "We are looking for a man (or woman) who can..." Why the brackets? No doubt some liberal male in the firm could be found who would argue that the brackets indicate that it wasn't necessary to specify "or woman" at all - everyone knows that "man" means "human." But of course the brackets carry another message too: they say "Well, of course, we could employ a woman... but we don't expect to..."

There, but not there: when newspapers reported new statistics on average wages in the country, almost without exception they equated the average national wage with the average male national wage and were thus able to conclude that workers in Britain earn £40 a week... when in fact women workers earn £23. And so the unholy marriage of capitalism and sexism is once again consummated, for the wage figures of the lowest paid workers, tucked away in brackets, are disregarded in calculating the 'average.' There, but not there: a woman wrote recently to *The Journalist*, paper of the NUJ, pointing out that information circulated by her branch about how to claim state benefits when on strike had totally ignored the position of married and cohabiting women.

We are there, but not there: and so the Government can put notices in the papers about claiming benefits, notices which, while allegedly directed to everyone, contain the phrase "if you or your wife..." We fill in tax forms which ask us for details of our wives, and carry passports marked "accompanied by his wife." Never mind that, being a woman, you have no wife and expect to have none: they can't print special forms for every little eccentricity. Get back in your

brackets.

Forget the sexism of a headline such as "Hospital Men Reject £43m" in the *Guardian*, Dec 10, referring to a pay offer turned down by the hospital ancillary workers; it is simply inaccurate to imply that all hospital ancillaries are male, besides being a distortion of the content of the story, which stated that one of the workers' demands is equal pay by February. Is it any wonder that equal pay claims fall by the wayside when the very language of a 'liberal' paper consigns it to brackets?

Surely a scientific magazine should not allow a sexist convention to blur its clarity. In December the *New Scientist* carried an analysis of the earnings of professional chemists, as compared with the earnings of manual workers. But as the words "men" and "workers" were used interchangeably throughout, we were left not knowing whether women were included in the figures. There or not there?

Men are a "special subject" just as women are. By all means let people write about men's earnings, men's problems, men's jobs, men's interests. But let them make clear that that is what they are doing. The alternative is not simply sexist, it is wrong, inaccurate, incorrect: bad journalism.

When we are tempted to believe

that controversies and campaigns about language are really too trivial to deserve the energies of women who could otherwise be campaigning for the "real" struggles about pay and abortions, we do well to look at the ways in which our social position reflects our grammatical brackets. It is surely the responsibility of everyone who uses language - and that doesn't just mean people who write for publication, it means everyone who speaks - to use that language as a political tool.

Chairperson? Well, yes and no. The trouble about *chairperson* is that it tends only to be used selectively. Thus a woman is a *chairperson* and a man remains a *chairman*. Thus the male retains his status, charges of sexism can be rebutted and the dreaded word *woman* is avoided. And this determined avoidance of the word *woman* - whether the substitute word is *chick*, *girl*, *lady* or *person* - is the brackets at work again. Ignore them and they'll go away.

Well, we're not going to go away. We'll keep our women's magazines, like *Spare Rib*, and our women's movement, but not as a pair of brackets - as an entirely new sentence. Let's recognise the immense power of language to mould thought and behaviour, and use it for our purpose. □

Nursery Workers

Nursery Staff Action Group meetings continue regularly in London. Here, the group reports on a meeting held at the end of November. You can contact NNAG c/o St Peter's Toddlers Club, St Peter's, Eaton Square, London SW1.

Newsletter: Considering how many people wrote to us, we wondered if a national newsletter would be a good idea. We agreed it would, but probably would require more money and labour power than we have at the moment. Along with this idea goes the one about a national conference - getting the existing action groups and all other interested individuals together.

Where are we going? We again discussed the small attendance at our meeting - a direct contrast to the large number of letters we received. A suggestion was made for broadening our base to include all people who work with under-fives - teachers, social workers, playgroup leaders, etc.

Perhaps calling ourselves *nursery workers* puts off some potential supporters. We need to consolidate our efforts with other co-workers

and their unions - teachers and the NUT, for example. In the past, nursery teachers may not have been sympathetic to their assistants' problems, and social workers rarely question the pay and conditions of the workers to whom they happily pass a 'deprived' child. We need to break down these barriers.

Trades Councils and the Working Womens Charter: Under the auspices of the Islington Trades Council sub-committee on the WWC, a meeting is being held to discuss nursery provision and the nursery workers demands. Parents who use the nurseries and those on the waiting list are also being invited. In a time of economic crisis we are threatened with cuts in services and wages.

Organising with the trade union movement, the womens movement and consumers of services is essential to press forward. Specific goals of this meeting are to form a local action group to fight for the 35 hour week with overtime pay, and to have nursery workers designated key workers in order to avoid a freeze on filling vacancies.



Members of the Wanstead and Woodford Women's Liberation Group, who have been helping to distribute the Women's Liberation cards which were produced to raise funds for *Spare Rib*.

Left to right, they are: Sandra Oliver, a Corporate Relations Officer; Meenah Shah, gynaecologist and GP; Connie Jensen, housewife; Maire Cunningham, teacher; Jackie Cuskelly, teacher; Janice Wilding, legal secretary.

Orders came in from Holland and the United States as well as this country, many with messages of solidarity. "We also got a number of orders - and enthusiastic supportive remarks - from men belonging to Men against Sexism," said Sandra Oliver.

The cards, which are printed with a list of the principal women's centres on the back page, will be useful as notelets throughout the year. They come in packs of 10 for 50p, either from the Wanstead and Woodford Group at 9 Northumberland Avenue, London E12 5HF, or from Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham Street, London WC2.

CLASSIFIEDS

If you want to join or start a group, find work or a travel companion, start a household or share a house, having something to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

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Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
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16		
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31		
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GROUPS

Southsea area. Anyone interested in starting a women's group contact Anne-Marie, 41 St Andrews Road, Southsea.

Are there any groups in the Plymouth area, if not is anyone interested in starting one. Phone Jill Plymouth 63056.

Any groups in Swiss Cottage/Chalk Farm Area? Contact Linda, 71 Fellows Road, NW3. Needs Help.

North London. Beginners only. Study group. Write in detail Box no. 323.

Anyone in Chelmsford interested in forming WL group please contact Margaret Willis, 1 Coppins Close, Chelmsford, Essex. Telephone 53515.

Dundee WL contact Alison Malet, 1 Lynewood Place, Phone 452063

Blackburn Women's Liberation Group. New members. Blackburn 663627

ASPECTS OF THE GREAT GODDESS

How useful are female power myths to our individual development as women? A four-week group at Community Growth

Centre, led by Anne Severson, begins 13th February. For information phone 01-351-1372.

CARTOONISTS, illustrators, photographers (feminists) needed to cheer up Spare Rib. Unfortunately unpaid. Please phone us.

CLASSES

Women's Co-counselling Class starting in February and possibly meeting on Thursday afternoons. Learn a peer self-help method for changing rigid behaviour patterns and relieving emotional distress. Call Margaret Green 01-624 9131

WEA class 'women in the 20th Century' continuing on Thursdays 7.30 - 9.30 at 28B Torrington Square, London WC1. Ring Sue Sharpe 01-254 9497 for details.

Language Study and Social Club. Friendly atmosphere. Beginners welcome. 37½p per hour. Call Francois 727 1645

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Info...Odds & Sods...A

Marriage

In reference to the item headed "marriage" in your advice columns (Spare Rib 29) some of your readers may be interested to learn that there are more forms of wedding ceremony than is generally supposed.

My own practice for instance when two people ask about wedding ceremonies is to invite them to create their own, with as little or as much help from me as they want. This of course they should in my view be at perfect liberty to do, with the exception of the two legal declarations which you quote.

A wedding can be an important opportunity for two people to express what they really feel and intend, and if they have full control over what is said or enacted, as I believe they should, then there is no need to go through the sexist and for most people religiously hypocritical service, which is reckoned to be the only alternative to the bald legality of the Registry Office. Some idea of what is possible may be gleaned from the book "The New Wedding" by Khoren Arisian (Vintage Books - New York 1973).

In writing this I don't think I'm in total isolation. Some other Unitarian ministers think as I do, and I believe that South Place Ethical Society has its own form of wedding ceremony, Love and Peace, Keith Gilley, All Souls' Unitarian Church, Hoop Lane, Golders Green, NW11.

Semen Allergy?

I am confused by a problem that I have. I have developed a sensitivity to my boyfriend's semen.

After six months of being on the pill I had an attack of cystitis for which my doctor prescribed some antibiotic pills. These worked but I contracted thrush. However after some time I was proclaimed cured and the soreness and discharge has disappeared, but I still suffered soreness and swelling and the need to pass water when intercourse culminated in internal ejaculation. So I went back to my clinic and the doctor prescribed me some cream marked 'therapeutic vaginal jelly'. But it was so inconvenient, boring and messy that we gave up, preferring the previous situation of avoiding ejaculation internally.

Recently we decided that we had avoided it for too long (2 years). So we went to the clinic and explained our situation. The doctor seemed confounded and said that we'd need to be desensitised over a long

period. But this will not be possible until we have finished our courses at University and Art College - at least another three years. But our relationship seems permanent and we think that in the long run it may be worth waiting for. I have never heard of anyone else complaining of this, except a friend who says she sometimes experiences it after ejaculation, and also on a TV programme about allergies which said that many women were allergic to sperm.

If this is true, why has there been no publicity concerning the problem? I don't think this is an allergy. The soreness only lasts approx. 1/2-hour to hour.

The doctor suggests a large Ph difference between the semen and vaginal fluid.

Have you heard from any other women who have this problem, or am I alone? If not why has it been hushed up?
Yours, Holly S.W. 11.

*Dear Holly,

I'm afraid I could find absolutely no one who had ever heard of an allergy to semen. But I talked to a woman at Grapevine who suggested that you got your GP to refer you to a gynaecologist at a hospital. He/she would perform extensive smear tests including a test for allergies in order to locate the exact cause of the trouble, and your boyfriend should have his semen tested in order to rule out the possibility that he is carrying something (like thrush or NSU for example) that you might be continually contracting. However, if the hospital finds no evidence of anything unusual or medically incompatible about the pair of you, and you are still worried, Grapevine suggested that you paid them a visit to talk over the problem with them. Their address is 296 Holloway Road, N7, Tel. 607 0949. I know it's a long way away from you but it may well be worth it.

P.S. Any other readers had this problem?

Menstruation

Do you know if anything is known about the actual composition of menstrual blood and if there are any possible uses for it? I think it is a terrible waste of blood, even if it is not an enormous amount; some women have a very heavy loss and really some women lose some every month, so all together it's quite a lot of blood going down the drain.

Periods also waste money spent on pads and tampons, and time and energy in having to buy and change

them, and the extra trips to the toilet and days off sick for the unluckier ones.

I am hoping menstrual blood could be used for some of the purposes that blood donated through the elbow is used for. If it could be used, it could be sucked out once a month in clinics or even by women at home, so that instead of a five day affair, it would only take an hour or so, travelling to the clinic.

I think this is a fantastic idea, though women I have spoken to have thought it repulsive, but they find their own bodies and sex organs repulsive as well. Perhaps they will change their ideas some day.

Eva Zyborska.

* Dear Eva,

Sorry to disappoint you, but according to reliable authorities, menstrual blood is a waste product and therefore unsuitable to use in the same way as the blood extracted from the arms of blood donors. In fact it contains very little actual blood: its constituents are a mixture of the endometrium or lining of the womb and the unfertilised ovum plus about two ounces (60 ccs) of blood.

However, menstrual extraction has been proved to be an effective simple method of abortion though hitherto illegal in this country. It is not completely painless - something like period pains are experienced for a time afterwards and it is necessary to rest for an hour, but according to all reports the psychological effects are very positive. Yet it seems not to have been investigated as a means of coping with periods: I don't know whether there is a valid medical reason for this, but if it ever became a potential practice it would certainly create some resistance from the companies who market Tampax and Lillies etc.

Sexism and Psychology

I have recently embarked on a combined honours degree in Psychology and Sociology. I am quickly discovering the bias that exists against women in the discipline of Psychology emanating particularly in the field of Psycho-biology. Although I find it difficult to contend with many of the sexist attitudes that are continually being demonstrated, I have decided to continue with the subject with an intent to learn it thoroughly so that I might criticise it effectively.

I would be most grateful if you

could give me some advice as to where I might obtain a non-sex-biased account of the psychology of child development and learning. Any advice you may be able to offer will be greatly appreciated by myself and fellow sympathisers/activists on the course.

I enjoy your magazine very much and read it every month - when New English Library remember to send it to me.

Yours in sisterhood
Sue Cooke
University of Keele.

*Dear Sue,

There is a Women and Psychiatry Workshop in London which is working on all these questions which are preoccupying you. They have recently produced a two page reading list which covers exactly the material you are looking for. Copies are not available yet, but if you write to Vicky Randall in the near future c/o The Polytechnic of Central London, Room 708, Elsley Court, 20-22 Great Titchfield St., London W1, she will send you one. Please send 5p to cover costs.

Groups

Lesbians in Lancaster have recently set up their own group. We have lots of plans for future activities, parties etc. We'd like to hear from other Lesbian groups about what they're doing and any difficulties they've come across, and to exchange ideas and information. We would also like to hear from any women living in the area who would like to get in touch. We meet on Wednesday evenings in women's houses.

Phone Carol at Lancaster 66904 or write to Marian Shapiro at 33 Primrose St., Lancaster. Love and Sisterhood, Marian and Carol.

We should like to tell you about a new women's group which is in the process of being established in Bingley. There are weekly meetings where we discuss our ideas, experiences and feelings and hopefully come to some conclusions. We are also involved in the teaching of immigrant women, who are the most oppressed in the local community, and our other main project is a play-group in the town, which will be run on a collective basis. Please would you print our address somewhere in the magazine and anyone who is interested can contact us here.
Yours sincerely,
Ursula Stickland (on behalf of the group).

towards a new order

Cathy Ward writes about herself and women's liberation and how these changes have been reflected in her work as a sculptor.



This is the second in our series, following the request in Spare Rib No.28 for readers to interview themselves.

I was born knowing what a let-down it was to be a woman. When I was nineteen, undergoing sporadic psycho-analysis, I had one of a few dreams that dealt specifically with my birth in a highly dramatic way. In the dream I was rushing down a green tunnel, full of anticipation and joy, when an awesome voice began to inform me of some impending tragedy in which I was to participate. Suddenly I was out in a clearing and there in front of me was a white cherubic statue on a pedestal. The doom-laden voice spoke again, "This could have been the most beautiful child in the world but it has no... it's lost it... it has been broken." The full weight of my sterile predicament fell, the statue was of me; I was not intact, I had been born a girl.

The irony is that I make statues or rather sculptures now. I first started working with clay in my first year at art college. Dismayed by Duchamp and my sophisticated environment I began shaping the figure of a woman in my hands: she was bent in on herself, head bowed and hidden, with huge immovable thighs. The theme obsessed me for weeks and I made several models of her, all equally inward looking and egg-like. Then a whim seized me and I made a fiery, robust Chinese lion. His head was held high and he was snarling. Tutors were impressed and so was I. Where had he emerged from, this surprisingly energetic animal? The truth dawns still only slowly - the energy is mine, I am not sterile, I am intact, I am a woman.

And the models of the woman I was making started to change. At first still passive, I placed her lumpily in bath-tubs but with face lifted and open, or I demonstrated her enjoying the feel of washing her hair; but soon I had to devise ways of making her stand erect and at last dance with body taut and hands reaching out for fulfilment. Because in all the models, the woman ached for a man, for a child, for completion.

I was reading a lot of D.H. Lawrence and a lot of Jung and I treasured the concept of woman as voluptuous, mysterious and earthy and man her complement, supreme, super-conscious, with capacities way beyond her scope. These were the comforting archetypal-seeming ideas that I

pondered on through those first years at college, and I only absorbed writing that reaffirmed them. I did read a Betty Friedan book, but at that time I couldn't identify with any woman who could act independently of men and marriage. I felt an unquestionable need to lean on someone and, in my work, I was committed to the idea of the interdependence of female fecundity and male potency.

The women in my sculptures then were great full-breasted mothers giving birth, ripe with love for their man and their children. While the men, whom by now I was also making, were often magnificently equipped with erect penises and heroically muscular limbs yet, crucially for me, I felt bound to show them protecting and supporting the female figures. My contact with real men at this time was not so well aspected. But the dialogue I was having with myself through clay was proceeding from strength to strength and on one level at least there was a joyful giving-birth and a powerful sense of connection with the balancing of opposite poles of being that I was trying to depict.

When I eventually met Richard, whom I later married, the idea of the Jungian "conjunctio", the blissful joining of the sexes inside and outside of the body, was given a terrific boost and took a real grip on my work. Couples holding, embracing, sleeping in each other's arms and often having intercourse, were my main topic. Forced to live away from Richard for two years, while I was at the R.C.A. in London and he still at college in the North, my vision of heterosexual happiness became more convincing the more urgently I was in need of it. While still at college we got married though we were living apart except for weekends and, three months later and intentionally, I was pregnant.

During those nine months I felt more alive and more dead than I ever have since. My own and the baby's vulnerability inside me, made me sensitive to both a deep-rooted sadness and an equally fundamental gladness and pride. As the birth approached I tried to communicate with the child in my womb and to adjust myself to the possibility of its being female, since I didn't want my psychically damaging birth to take effect on my own child. I tried to make models of mothers with baby daughters, but it was a losing battle - that old dissatisfaction at being female and the fact that I came from a family of girls, made me long to hold, breastfeed, caress something different from myself, something potent, a male offspring naturally. Thus I was perpetrating my own trauma. How released from this guilt and fear I was when the little purpley child with the gleaming red and swollen testicles was lifted from me and shown to us - a boy.

For the first few months my particular myth about motherhood faltered on. I was still at college with all that meant in terms of contact with the outside world and I took the baby in with me as often as I could, breastfeeding him in the room where I worked and changing him amidst clay dust, other people's plaster moulds and crisp packets. I worked at home a fair amount, the baby slept a lot and I even enjoyed myself - it seemed as though I had the best of both worlds.



and means that had so often smoothed my own path. Betty Friedan suddenly made sense. Hopefully, I made a sculpture of a woman with her legs wide open displaying her vagina for contemplation, awe and delight, as the female Tantric figures do. I made several vaginas, "yonis", on their own, always conscious of the self-sufficiency of the real object and the symbol.

Now, a few months later, we have moved again to a small, much less respectable, much more practical back-to-back house in Leeds, with just enough living space and a work-table and a kiln in the cellar. There are local toddler groups for our two-year-old and, as important, a women's movement group for me. I still feel that I have to juggle with housework versus my 'creative' work, versus being a mother, versus having a communicative relationship with Richard, versus finding out about women and myself. Some days everything is at odds, and I feel torn apart and vitriolic in consequence. Other days I feel elated that all the bits are coming together.

And what am I doing in my sculptures now? Well, they are certainly not full of the consummation that I had dreamed of - they are much more about the inevitable power and consciousness struggle carried on between men and women in the midst of sexual forces that complicate the whole issue. It is a painful and frightening conflict and as yet in my work and in my life there is no comfortable end in sight.

I also want to make some sculptures of women together, not to show their aesthetic possibilities, but the unlimited potential of their interaction and growth. In the book of D.H. Lawrence's paintings, which I greatly admire, there are two water-colours of men joining together in a joyful sexual and psychic release; one is called 'Spring' and the other 'Renaissance of Men'. I find it sad that he seems to have felt that men were ultimately more capable of profound contact with each other than women. I disagree with him now, so severing yet another link with my past.

And I am beginning to confound the icy threat of that vivid birth dream - for that was about a birth into the old order, where to be a woman was to be impotent, and now we are on our way to finding a new order. ●



Our courses ended, and we moved up North into a large stone terraced house in the country, and gradually the gruesome truth began to emerge - that I had voluntarily closed myself in with a now active baby, a house and a husband which all to a greater or lesser extent needed looking after. So much for the best of both worlds. My college years had not prepared me for this: the sheer hard work and isolation of being an ordinary housewife. I had thought I would be able to cope, retain my over-indulged individuality, but I found that the daily drudgery and the weight of my initial and unrealistic concern about keeping things clean and tidy had a bludgeoning effect on my psyche.

I was too tired to make love and even the cornerstone of my sanity, my ability to have and enjoy ideas and dreams, was threatened. I had bitter arguments over housework with Richard,

because now that he was working nine to five, driving a van, I couldn't get it into my head that maintenance of the home was my job. It may sound naive but until this point it hadn't occurred to me that if a woman had a child and a home, she automatically turned into a housewife. Since I had obsessively followed my own bent at college I wasn't instantly equipped for teaching or being a commercial success - I tried to persevere with my work but I felt as though my back had been broken. With no foreseeable alternatives, the pressure of the daily demands dried me up.

Then I came across a copy of *Spare Rib* and Richard noticed *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in the library and generously brought it home for me. Abruptly I began to think single-mindedly about women - women with and without men, with and without children, with and without the education



“What do you think of the idea of a theatre run by women for women?”

Jackie Thrupp

Sheila: I'm terribly against the segregating thing; I mean I'm not in theatre purely because of women's liberation for a start. I think of art as a whole as the most important thing, and life as a whole and people as a whole, and to exclude men seems to be rather daft.

Jackie: I'm not really talking about excluding men, I'm rather more talking about *including* women. We know that there are far fewer parts for women, far less work, certainly for writers . . .

Sheila: But it doesn't seem to remedy it by chucking out men.

Jackie: I'm not saying chuck out the men, and exclude men from your audiences. I'm trying to deal with a concept of women's theatre where, if you like, you are trying to cross certain frontiers of the mind with theatre and you're a woman trying to do it and it might be easier working in a situation where women ran the theatre, instead of the familiar hierarchy.

Sheila: I agree that the familiar hierarchy is boring but I don't think that this again excludes men.

Jackie: Why do you think the familiar hierarchy exists?

Sheila: Well, for commercial reasons, and because of tradition and because men have always done it and at the moment women haven't got the courage to do it.

Jackie: Is it only courage that they lack?

Sheila: I try to analyse it and certainly as far as women writers are concerned . . . one of the awful things about theatre that I find is the criticism, is the brickbats, is preparing a play and then being told you're lousy in it – that must be even more so for a writer, whether you say you care about criticism or not. I don't mean just the critics, I mean everybody who comes to see the show, you are laying yourself open and making yourself totally vulnerable. I think women are conditioned on the whole, I certainly was, to expect praise, to be safe, to be cherished, looked after, and I think it takes a tremendous act of courage to write something or do something and say, right, now criticise me, and I think as yet most of us lack the courage. For instance, I frequently say things on the air like 'I wish more women would write', and I get an avalanche of letters from women saying 'We've got an idea, wouldn't it be funny to do a series about such and such'. I write back and say yes, do it, and 9 times out of 10 they don't. Whether it's because they are frightened of not being able to do it, of failing in other words, or whether it's because they haven't got the time – a lot of them are housewives and it's difficult but not impossible to organise the day . . . but that's an excuse, a get-out because all of us work . . .

Jackie: Yes, that's very familiar to me, you make time . . .

Sheila: Yes, but for some reason they don't do it and I think the same applies in management – if you put on plays, mount plays and you are in charge of an organisation that presents plays, you are open to criticism and I think again this awful thing comes in that we are not yet prepared to fail.

Jackie: What about women who are prepared to fail and do expose themselves and do finish the project?

Sheila: They're a mess like me . . .

Jackie: What a cop out. Ooh, I won't put that in, not in Spare R'b.

Sheila: Seriously, what do you mean, what about them?

Jackie: There are women who write plays and who don't get them accepted, who are turned down constantly.

Sheila: Well, they don't write very good ones.

Jackie: 'Very good' – now what criteria are you using?

Sheila: It depends where they are entering their plays for – if they're selling to a commercial theatre, they've got to be commercial, or they've got to be entertaining, or funny, or interesting or they've got to be original. You'd be amazed how many scripts one gets that are none of those things, they're bloody boring and have no merit whatsoever.

Jackie: So originality is a point to look for . . . now if you're a woman writing for theatre and you're not going to go along with what could be a commercial success, then you're probably dealing with areas that haven't been touched on in theatre, which was what I was talking about at the beginning, and for a woman who is saying anything radical . . .

Sheila: I agree with you there, and I've been up against this myself with planners when I've submitted any idea, particularly in the comedy area, that departs from the norm that they don't begin to understand. The hierarchy in television, is totally out of touch with what's happening to women and in management in theatre they are as well. Some critics in the theatre – one enormously important factor is that our critics are pretty out of touch with most of life but particularly with women's dilemma. If I might quote an example, a play I did, 'How the man in the moon marigold was affected by the Gamma Rays', a not very good American play, but I did it because it was about a woman who was sadistically cruel, mentally and physically to her children, and to me in the play it was absolutely clear why she was so – father fixation, background, terrible childhood, lack of opportunity, frustration, jealousy and all the things I think a lot of us feel, especially when we reach this woman's age, 40-ish. I was appalled to realise I was playing to male critics who have an image of what women should be and if you shatter that image they don't listen.

Jackie: So that's to do with crossing frontiers – given that we realize that men don't understand and that there's a hell of a lot to be said that hasn't been said yet in terms of theatre, should we in fact be wasting out time worrying about what the men think or should we be forging ahead trying to reach the women first – there are men with women and things happen . . .

Sheila: Yes, but I think that's one good reason why we should work with them. I think actors are particularly disposed to stand and listen, they really

"I don't think much of it, quite honestly."

Sheila Hancock



are, and to have them in a group is to bring more understanding to them.

Jackie: What about management and critics who do control things, the power they have...

Sheila: I think established actresses should fight to get things done. If I had a play I thought was valid, and I have to admit I am an actress who doesn't want to have a fiasco and a flop on her hands - I would fight to get it put on - I have done so. I regard being established as a responsibility. On BBC 2 I tried to break down one or two barriers in comedy that haven't been done before. It was edited because I had made it too long, and in fact it came down to be a very much more trivial programme than I had hoped it would be. Also it was put out very late at night when I had geared it to a popular audience - I didn't want it to be an elitist audience.

Jackie: You had no choice in that?

Sheila: No, because I'm not a planner.

Jackie: So there's always somebody up there controlling things.

Sheila: Well, that will always occur in life anyway, surely...

Jackie: I don't think that's a good enough reason to put up with it; in a way it's not to be tolerated, because it's not giving us a fair deal.

Sheila: I'm not saying it's a male/female thing - there will always surely be a system whereby you're going to be frustrated, that's the nature of life, fighting against frustration...

Jackie: Is it? Should it be?

Sheila: I think one's got to infiltrate into these places but I really don't think the way to do it is by going alone as women so that we'd then have only women at the top.

Jackie: Not to go alone always, but perhaps at this point in time, because we realize there's a lot to be done and men aren't listening or seeing what it is we're trying to say. Perhaps we ought to get on and say it and then see what happens.

Sheila: I think we should gain strength from one another.

Jackie: Well, that's what the women's movement is supposed to be about...

Sheila: But I honestly don't like this idea of an only women company, that worries me. I like working with men, I like trying to make men understand, I think it's an essential part of the battle...

Jackie: So do I, but... The all-women group Sistershow is relevant here. We've found that men are terrifically interested, more interested because we're all women... there's also hostility, of course, and from both sexes, which you would expect. Let me ask you about comedy. What is comedy?

Sheila: Oh God, you can't ask me that... so many different types of comedy - comedy of identification, comedy of shock, black comedy...

Jackie: OK, then. What is it that makes people laugh? Is it touching on a truth?

Sheila: Different things make different people laugh. I don't think you can generalise. I can prove that by audiences.

Jackie: What do you think people laugh at in a woman?

Sheila: Difficult to say. I think we've a long way to go before we get everybody to laugh *with* women; I think most laughter is gained at women's expense.

Jackie: Would you play a line that was at a woman's expense?

Sheila: I have done many times.

Jackie: And what do you feel when you're doing that?

Sheila: I feel more worried about it now, my awareness of women's situation is only a very recent thing... I mean there are lines now I wouldn't dream of saying. But we mustn't be too pie, too serious about things, there's always the fall guy, always the idiot, a lot of comedy is at people's expense. We mustn't say that women must never be the fall guy; that isn't necessarily against women, it's just comedy. Some people are idiots, clowns. I don't think we must be afraid in comedy of criticising women, of making them seem unattractive, funny through unattractiveness; a lot of us are. I think that's a valid thing to laugh at, some women are awful and deserve to be laughed at as much as some men. I object very often to the sort of humour most people approve of enormously, that is the Monty Python sort of humour about women... all tits and men dragging up.

Jackie: What about the standard that makes 'attractive'? Don't we have to look at what makes women appear unattractive anyway?

Sheila: Yes, I think we do, but you can't go into depths like that in a half-hour comedy show.

Jackie: But humour is a terrific tool to use, it's very serious.

Sheila: I agree, but I still say we shouldn't exclude self-criticism.

Jackie: Somebody being a star, what does that mean to you?

Sheila: What do you mean?

Jackie: Because of media, communications, we have stars, egos, the fame thing, personality cults, people up there because of something about them, often put up there by other people.

Sheila: Some emerge...



A scene from Sistershow

Jackie: What is a star to you and what do you think about the system that creates stars?

Sheila: I don't like false creation of stars, but there'll always be people I want to see more than others.

Jackie: So it is a personal judgement . . .

Sheila: Yes, but I'm a professional, I'm not brainwashed like the public are. Stars who are forced into a position by publicity don't usually last, the nitty-gritty of it is buying the tickets and going again.

Jackie: I'm wondering why some people survive and some don't.

Sheila: Usually they work bloody hard, the ones that last. And there's a sexual quality too, very often. I don't think it's a thing you'll eliminate, I think natural stars will always come to the surface . . .

Jackie: Do you feel competitive with other actresses?

Sheila: I occasionally feel a twinge of envy when I see an actress getting opportunities that haven't come my way. Acting is so much an interpretive career - you're only as good as the part you're given.

Jackie: Are you more interested in making people laugh than in anything else?

Sheila: Yes, although I underrated it for a long time. I think it does people a great deal of good.

Jackie: A social service . . . Just to go back to what we were talking about. Do you think there's a place for feminist theatre?

Sheila: Meaning? . . .

Jackie: Theatre which is dealing with women's situation from a woman's viewpoint.

Sheila: Yes, of course.

Jackie: What direction would you see that going in, given that it's going to be hard to do it commercially.

Sheila: To begin with, the public has altered enormously, though when the next generation becomes middle-aged, they are going to want different fare. At the moment it's got to be done in a fringe capacity. I desperately want it to be a mass thing, I'm a bit bored with being a fringe thing . . .

Jackie: I'm really with you. What about the vast numbers of women who feel alienated by women in the movement? Humour is one of the greatest ways to reach people.

Sheila: I'm sure of that. My ideas aren't all that concrete, yet. If I sat down and tried to write a play incorporating all I believed in it would be boring



A scene from DEJA REVUE - a revue of revues

and banal. I'm unsure of what I'm on about . . . my foundations aren't strong enough.

Jackie: But you always come back to the same thing, that you're a woman, you're female. That's a pretty strong base.

Sheila: But I don't feel female against the world. I'm a well treated female. I get angry on behalf of my fellow females in life . . . In life as well as theatre, people write letters and pour their souls out to you, mainly because of comedy, because it doesn't happen to straight actresses I know. I am quite appalled at the lives some women are forced to lead - not being aware of the life they could or should have.

Jackie: Do you think you should point things out to them because they're not happy?

Sheila: That's a dangerous process. One of the awful things that's happened with this movement is that women who have been true to their conditioning and dedicated their lives . . . it is well nigh impossible for those women to do something at that age and they are usually the women who say that women's liberation is disgusting, through sheer horror of their lives being a total write-off. It's like religion. I'm very wary about undermining another person's faith - although in my opinion it's a wrong one - unless I can shoulder the responsibility of those people I would be very wary of destroying what they've got.

Jackie: And there isn't time to shoulder the responsibility.

Sheila: A lot of women can't just go, financially or any other way.

Jackie: You can't take the mat from someone's feet . . .

Sheila: Unless you've got the strength to support them. It's a big responsibility, a physical impossibility.

Jackie: So it comes down to personal responsibility - being responsible for yourself is first . . .

Sheila: I do try within my limits to do what I can.

Jackie: There's a terrific response in theatre or anywhere to women from other women where they hear/see things that are right.

Sheila: I don't see why men can't be included in the saying of it.

Jackie: Depends on what you want to do, say, and how much time you are prepared to spend bringing a man gently along with you because he's going to have problems if you're doing something for women.

Sheila: And lots of women are, aren't they? ●

Sheila Hancock is at present appearing in *Deja Revue* - a review of revues - at the New London Theatre and Jackie Thrupp is touring with the all-women *Sistershow*.

BOOKS

Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear by Erin Pizzey Penguin 45p

Chiswick Women's Aid started in 1971 in a small short-life property in Belmont Terrace, Hounslow. It's now an internationally known refuge for battered women with a large house in Chiswick High Road. It's been in the forefront of bringing to public attention the appalling extent to which wife battering is part of the British family's way of life, as well as an inspiration to many other refuge houses. Erin Pizzey, who set up Chiswick, has written an extremely moving account, documented with letters and statements from the women and children who came to the centre and from those more unfortunately never able to leave home.

The words of all these women and children are a crucial part of the struggle to make people recognise the violence in so many homes and see how it has been hidden away by the pressures of family life and social convention.

Everyone involved in organising Women's Aid centres will find this book really useful in impressing on the whole range of sceptical agencies and groups, Councils and Business how severe the problem really is. She quotes a woman from Cardiff: "Last night he punched me across the mouth and cut my lip which is black and blue and he cut the back of my head. He has been wasting the money and keeping us short so I asked him about it and that was the result. He is the worse for drink... I dread the nights he goes out drinking and comes back drunk. I have to work full-time and am a shorthand typist. I stuck it here because of the children or else I would go."

And another, "I am in the unfortunate position of being knocked about by my husband ever since he had a type of blackout... I only have a few relatives in the London area. I have found it difficult to get separate accommodation." This is the reality of the 'Catch 22' as Erin Pizzey calls it. If a woman stays at home and puts up with being battered, because there is nowhere else to go, then it's assumed that she likes it. Even if she has the courage to leave her husband, her legal dependence on him becomes very apparent. As a Moslem woman said, "I told the policeman to bring me a social worker, Miss Williams... I told Miss Williams I wanted a place where nobody would know where I was staying. Miss Williams said to me see a solicitor and get a divorce. I said where shall I stay during this time and she said, 'In your home of course'."

However, Erin Pizzey tends to neglect the aftermath of leaving home, arriving and living at a Women's Aid house and sorting out some kind of future are all areas that Erin Pizzey tends to neglect. This somehow leaves the book without a context. There needs to be a coherent philosophy embracing the day to day problems of running a centre, sharing responsibilities, getting legal and social help, if Women's Aid centres are to be something more than temporary balm for the bruises of battered women. ■

Jane Ashdown
Lewisham Women's Aid



Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear



Illustration by Terry Shivasani

REVIEWS

Ann Oakley's Study of Housework. *Housewife*, Allen Lane £3.50 *Sociology of Housework*, Martin Roberston £1.95.

Ann Oakley's study of housework, begun in 1969, has resulted so far in three books. All have important things to say about the position of women. The first *Sex, Gender and Society* looked at the varying definitions of 'male' and 'female' in different societies. *Housewife* includes four case studies and mainly discusses the current position of women. *Sociology of Housework* analyses in detail Ann Oakley's original survey of forty London housewives. She has succeeded in exposing the sexism which underlies much sociological thought while at the same time using sociological methods to find out about the real situation of women. In this respect her work is comparable with Sheila Rowbotham's attempt to write a new kind of women's history.

Although *Housewife* is intended for a fairly general audience, at present it's only published in hardback and rather expensive. It opens with a definition of the role of the housewife, stressing these four vital characteristics. Only women are housewives; housework is unpaid and always involves economic dependence; housework is a low status occupation not classed as work; and lastly, housework normally has priority over other roles for women. The vast majority of women are housewives for a major part of their lives. In a random sample of over 7,000 women between the ages of 16 and 64, 85% were housewives. Yet up to now we have had virtually no serious analysis of housework or its history (although Lee Comer's *Wedlocked Women* has recently made familiar much of this kind of material).

Unlike most other work it is private and its boundaries are self-defined. This means that women are free to do as much or as little as they feel internally compelled to do. The driving mechanism of housework is characteristically not external compulsion but internal guilt. Some women feel obliged to wash kitchen floors twice a day, others once a week. Also housework is self-perpetuating and only gets commented on when it's not done.

Ann Oakley looks briefly (but not very satisfactorily) at the position of the housewife in pre-industrial society and at the changes which industrialisation brought about. Growth of factory production meant that men no longer worked from home, and that women's work outside the home became seen as a secondary occupation. 'The most important and enduring consequence of industrialisation has been the emergence of the modern role of housewife as "the dominant mature feminine role"'. She argues that housewifery as we know it only exists in industrial societies, but does not explain how the modern nuclear family developed out of industrial society.

In *Housewife*'s four case studies the women talk about themselves and their attitudes to their house and children. This material is fascinating. Ann Oakley then examines the ways in which women are brought up to believe that their position in the home is natural, universal and necessary - for society to survive women must take on the role of housekeeper and mother. What she brings out most strongly is the effect of each woman's mother on her vision of what a 'proper mother' should be like; and the extent to which it is now the birth of the first child, D

rather than the fact of marriage itself, that ties the woman to the home. Sally Jordan, one of the women, who is not particularly sympathetic to Women's Liberation describes how women are conditioned as children into sexually stereotyped roles: "Really, you're prepared for motherhood. I think now when I buy my little girl's toys... she's got a cot, and she's got a pram, and you buy the ironing board and iron and a little washing machine - and it's all miniatures of what you have in real life later on. It's like being prepared for the future."

It's a pity though that Ann Oakley neglects other points that are equally striking; for example, the enormous competitiveness the women feel about their homes and children, the need to keep-up-with-the-Jones's. This may be because she was restricted by her own method.

As a non-sociologist, I was rather surprised to find *The Sociology of Housework* more interesting and imaginative than *Housewife*, partly because the material is less familiar. It begins by establishing the case that many of sociology's values and methods are sexist. Ann Oakley pin-points three main reasons for this. Sociology was founded by nineteenth century middleclass men; most sociologists now are men; and lastly that it uncritically accepts the social differences between men and women as 'natural'. She is particularly sharp about those sociologists who appear to be looking at male and female patterns in the family, but do so in an implicitly male orientated way. Wilmot and Young, for example, argue in the *Symmetrical Family* that a real shift of role has occurred, men are helping far more in the home, and that the trend is for both men and women to have two jobs, one in the home and one outside. Yet this view is based on a survey which asked whether husbands had helped in the home with various tasks at least once during the week!

In contrast Ann Oakley's own conclusions are that "Housewives are sharply aware of the fact that, however much or little husbands may share domestic tasks with them, the responsibility for getting the work done remains theirs." This view is based on her in-depth survey of forty London housewives, half of whom were 'working class' and half 'middle-class'.

She suggests that it is particularly important, when the woman's self-image

is deeply bound up with her role, to interview carefully and at length. For example, when asked about attitudes to the role of housewife virtually all the women were relatively positive to begin with, but the majority also expressed quite clear dissatisfaction with the day-to-day experience of housework. (This only emerged in the course of a long interview.) "The concept of 'feelings about housework' relates to women's approaches and responses to the daily experience of doing housework. By contrast, the concept of women's orientation to the housewife role describes the relationship between the notion of 'being a housewife' and the psychological identity of women. While the former is a question of job satisfaction in the home, the latter refers to the whole construction of psychological femininity and its 'fit' in a social world predicated on gender differences. The sense of self as a housewife (or not) is a deeply rooted facet of self-identity as feminine; the equation of femininity with housewifery is basic to the institution of family life and to the gender divisions which obtain in the paid work world (the existence of low paid women's jobs being a structural feature of this world.)"

One of the main findings of the survey is how little class affects women's attitudes to housework. "The incidence of dissatisfaction with housework, attitudes to work tasks, the specification of standards and routines, and identification with the housewife role are some of the most important dimensions on which no class difference is manifested." On the other hand, working class women appear to have a more 'positive' orientation to the role and consequently seek more satisfaction from it. Both groups, however, seem to feel dissatisfied with the work involved - its nature as a job makes it hard to feel otherwise.

Ann Oakley calls for the abolition of the housewife role, the abolition of the family and the abolition of gender roles. She stresses the central importance of revolution in attitudes as the only way to transform the position of women in the home and at work. Although I agree with her in her emphasis she underestates the importance of the division of labour to the survival of capitalism as we know it. Women perform crucial economic functions within our system - they provide unpaid labour in the home, they service and reproduce the labour force, they constitute the major consumer group and they act as a cheap supply of labour. Attacking the division of labour and the myth of motherhood involves a change in the economic and political institutions as well as a change in attitudes.

Catherine Hall

The Bottle Factory Outing by Beryl Bainbridge. Duckworth, £2.35



Beryl Bainbridge

Beryl Bainbridge rose to fame with her novel "Harriet Said", like an understudy who "made it" overnight. Since then she has published "The Dressmaker" (1973) and now "The Bottle Factory Outing". Her latest work is a *tour de force*, where events are piled one on top of the other, with no pause for reflection. It is a very long short story rather than a novel: action is all, and the people portrayed remain static.

There are links between all three books, the most obvious ones between the last two. But all her principal characters are psychological cases.

In "Harriet Said" two adolescent girls, bound to each other in a lesbian relationship, play the Lolita game. They lie their way through to their objective - experiences with men - with all the ruses and deceitfulness of "clever" children who have gone wrong. And they succeed in manipulating their parents and their male victims. Harriet is the instigator of it all, exerting a hypnotic influence over her friend. She carries out her commands to the letter, which results in precocious sexual experience and accidental murder. "The Dressmaker" is a portrait of matriarchy, seen through the distorting mirror of a working-class woman, suffering from an obsessional neurosis. Nelly, the dressmaker, is the deputy of the real matriarch, her dead mother, who rules her feelings and behaviour. Nelly's young niece, an infantile and innocent girl, is the psychological victim of this woman-made world, and a young American soldier, with whom she is in love, is its physical victim. Nelly kills him accidentally (?) because he dares to scratch "Mother's table" with his brass buttons, after having made love to Nelly's sister Margo. Family honour and matriarchy are revenged.

Beryl Bainbridge has a photographic imagination. She sees people and situations in every minute detail, but occasionally she appears not to trust her "inner eye". It is then that she indulges in over-writing:

"Mr. Hind laughed again, little moustache moving like a cork on the ocean of his lips" (in "Harriet Said"); "... her eyes veiled by the golden sweep of her lashes, her peach face shimmering amidst the golden strands of her blown hair" (in "The Bottle Factory Outing").

"The Bottle Factory Outing" shows particular similarities with Beryl Bainbridge's previous book. Both have the same Grand Guignol atmosphere. Horror and death and the horrors of death are seen as Black Comedy. Both books deal with a group of working-class people, infiltrated by foreigners. The Bottle Factory is, in fact, run by foreigners, namely Italian immigrants, and the English element is represented by two young women only, the tall and fleshy Freda, and the lanky unobtrusive Brenda. These two stir the emotions of their Italian workmates to such a pitch that all ends in disaster and death. The two women share a bedsit and a bed, which the fastidious Brenda divides into two by putting a row of books in the middle. Their relationship is close and ambivalent, with uprushes either of bad temper or of tenderness. Freda is a hysteric, who lives in a world of fantasy. Her imagination has the false glamour of *kitsch*, with a corresponding false sentimentality. Brenda, who has seen better times, is a masochist, a "born victim" who cannot bear to be touched, but is unable to say "no" to anybody, which leads her into unwanted and false situations all along the way. But she has a certain perception and sensitivity, and is fond of Freda.

Freda dreams of romance and chooses the one well bred Italian among her workmates, Vittorio, to become her lover. He is in two minds about her. She manipulates a factory outing for the sole purpose of finding a romantic setting for an intimate encounter with him. Everything goes wrong from the start. The van which was to bring the party to Windsor never arrives. In the end they all set out in two cars, playing hide and seek with each other. Freda is accidentally killed in the act of love-making, after having escaped from the party into the rhododendron bushes, hoping that Vittorio will follow her. He does. Another member of the party, a mad Irishman who loves Brenda and hates her, is the suspect. But it was probably Vittorio who killed her. Anyway he admits his guilt in the end.

Up to this point, the story has panache and inventive power. Beryl Bainbridge has also a good eye for sociological conditions. For instance, her concept of the Italian group transplanted onto alien soil, shows remarkable insight into their feudalism, their slavish obedience to authority and their obsessive preoccupation with family loyalties and honour. Beryl Bainbridge highlights both the primitivity and closeness of collective bondage in minority groups who feel threatened by their host nations. But the end of the book is a mistake. Freda's body is taken back to the bottle factory after an extensive car journey. There it is treated with brandy and pushed into a wine barrel, which is going to be shipped to Santander, marked "tainted". All this is in bad taste. It is neither grotesque nor macabre, but simply obscene.

Perhaps Beryl Bainbridge's best book so far is "Harriet Said", "The Dressmaker"

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coming a close second. "The Bottle Factory Outing" increases one's apprehension that her writing may become fixated on a "genre". It would be a pity if she misapplied her remarkable talent in this way, which could lead her future work into a cul-de-sac. ■

Dr Charlotte Wolff

Kid's Books

Superwomen ride into kids books

Aunt Fan
by Peggy Blakeley (based on the German original)
A & C Black 85p

Mrs. Gronkwonk and the Post Office Tower
by Timothy Hunkin
Angus and Robertson £1.35

The forceful female is becoming less of a stranger in children's picture books. Mrs. Gronkwonk and Aunt Fan are two recent examples of this new breed of woman let loose from the kitchen sink. Mrs. Gronkwonk is a 'large resourceful lady against indomitable odds' and this applies equally well to Aunt Fan. In fact both women are larger than life, super women. The similarities end there though; Mrs. (sic) Gronkwonk is a factory owner, boss and inventor in bare feet, long hair, and sack-like dresses, while Aunt Fan in the floral print, granny shoes and hat is the town's Strong Woman who puts things right.

All those kings and giants have at last met their match in Mrs. G.; "to calm herself down she made 14 bicycles, an epic film and discovered how to put red stripes in toothpaste;" she revolutionises her island's communication system with the post office tower she designs and

builds in her factory. She also knits, cures sick animals, makes a suspension bridge and discovers a coal mine. She relaxes too, with a bottle of wine for her picnic lunch. Hunkin's dynamic illustrations give us all the details and a lot of fun.

Mrs. Gronkwonk may be liberated (it's easy for bosses) but the four female workers at her planning meeting (among twenty males) are mysteriously absent when the real work of construction is done by Mrs. G. and her men. Luckily for Mrs. G. there is no "trouble at tower"; the workers are only token participants in

the decision making; indeed the whole population seems at her beck and call.

Meanwhile back in the high street, Aunt Fan stops a punch-up, rivals the Strong Man at the circus and props up, single handed, a toppling tram. Brave, independent and high-minded as well as strong, Aunt Fan commands respect. But it's a pity that this forceful woman is made a dismissable freak in old-fashioned clothes, who only hits the headlines because she's "as strong as a man", "My she's a corker!"

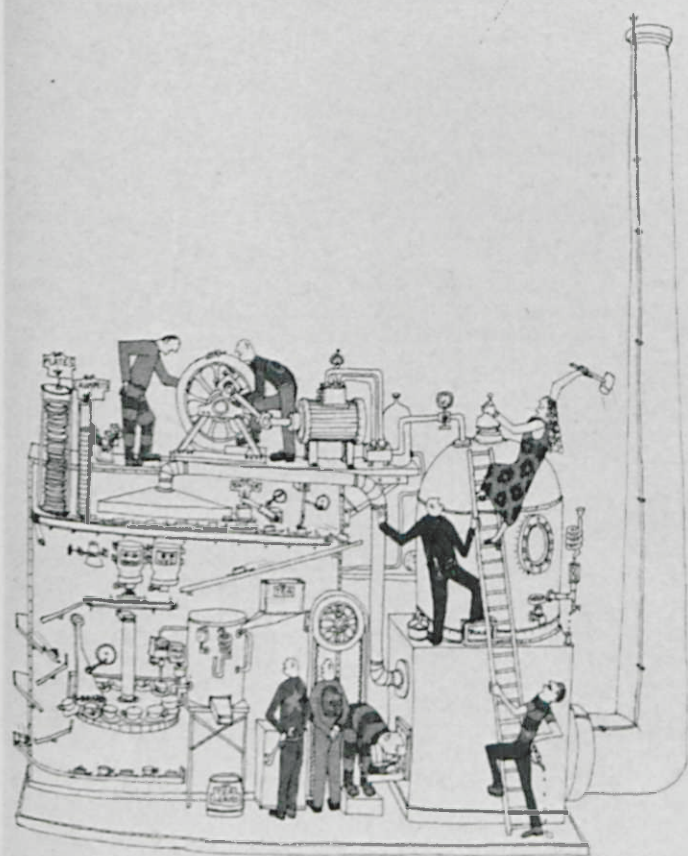
What price these super-women?

Heroics apart, they are still defined in terms of family status - someone's wife and someone's aunt. Despite their important role in realising girls' dreams of omnipotence and autonomy in an adult world, Mrs. G. and Aunt F. are odd women out. Super women and heroines are all very well, but must soon give place to a more honest depiction of girls and women. ■

Rosemary Stones
Children's Book Study Group



Aunt Fan with fists and broly



Tea and crumpet machine



Mrs Gronkwonk woke up feeling particularly energetic



Scenes from a Marriage

Stardust EMI

Stardust gives a potted history of the modern musician. What comes over most strongly is hatred – through scene after scene of banal fancies of what, at different moments, have been fashionable trends in the public lives of a host of different rock groups. From the band's first performance the lies begin. Back in the early 60s of beehive hairdos and discos, I remember the atmosphere as one of furtive, nervous defiance – not the complacent confidence of this lot – in either bands or audiences.

The relationship between members of a band, I remember also, as being fiercely loyal and determined by a common interest in the same sort of music. This rated more important than rivalry. Personal feuds and hatreds were subsumed to it. But in *Stardust* the dominant relationship is between Essex, whose charisma as a man eludes me, whereas his charm as a pretty boy is objectionable, and the manager of the band, Adam Faith.

The rest of the band revolt against this later. Yet they allowed Faith to get rid of one of them earlier because he liked fucking too much. Now that just isn't on – either as a true picture of musicians who are serious enough to create music that will draw a following as put up in this movie, or as a development of the plot.

The complex relationship between men who play music together, the intricate awareness between them, is ignored, and such characters as the other members of the band are pushed idiotically around to fit in with the story of the glorious pair.

Essex dedicates a song about the precious beauty of woman to his girlfriend. 'What about women's liberation', an American journalist probes her. I think she replies she doesn't need it. Snide jibes like that fit comfortably alongside the virtuous picture of the wife and son Essex forgot. Connolly might not have made his heroine a proper little rich girl who is so admirably incorruptible if he'd been at all sensitive to why women's liberation came out of this period, nor especially, would he have taken such long, naive delight at the screaming girls when the band enter their Beatles phase.

By the way, Essex just never comes across with even the tiniest droplet of sweat on his cheeks. Singing is an effortless activity, which descends like magic when the sound turns on.

The one strange moment which hangs in your mind because it was funny and accurate, is when the hippy girlfriend replies to some chauvinist comment by Essex, 'For a working class hero you're surprisingly bourgeois about women.' From two rows in front of me came a burst of female laughter which I joined in.

It's a paltry film, making sweeping criticism of the corruption in the record industry, the profit motive, while not attempting to make any sense of why this is so; making accusations against abuse of power, without any sensible understanding of power. In fact, doing the opposite, and showing the only possible relationship between men as a battle for power. Promoting the notion of the irresistible male sex appeal, then tut-tutting about the consequences. The list could be endless. Cliche after cliche, moral indignation, silly reasoning. And it's all propaganda. It takes all the sensationalist myths of a period we have lived through and some of us have grown up in and puts them across as truth. A reality that never was, a culture that seems just to exist, with its rhymes beyond any reason, and certainly without serious consideration of any of the contradictions in it.

By *Stardust's* implication, music's only value is manipulation. At the same time as it treads its feet all over any pride you might feel about music that has expressed the feelings of a generation, it righteously attempts to suck the passions out of you and pummel them along towards the hero's suicide. I guess I'm beginning to understand what decadence is. It's there in films like *Stardust* which, under the fool's guise of earnest morality, try to make you swallow violence, pessimism, sexism, in large doses. An eyeful of *Stardust* and you end up with a bellyful of grit, wanting to kick the person next to you to get some satisfaction. ■

Marsha Rowe

THEATRE

What every woman should know by J.M. Barrie.

With Dorothy Tutin, Dorothy Reynolds, Clive Morton, Peter Egan. Directed by Clifford Williams.

'What every Woman Knows' was first performed in London in 1908: five years after the Women's Social and Political Union was founded to campaign for women's suffrage, and coinciding with the first wave of militant tactics by the suffragettes. Barrie's play must, therefore, have been a very topical event; and Barrie appears to champion the 'cause', through the play's male centrepiece, John Shand, who, through his hunger for learning and personal ambition, picks up a pin which sends him soaring in eight short years to the House of Commons and the attention of government ministers in his support for women's suffrage. The 'pin' is Maggie Wylie, and their relationship develops out of mutual self-interest on the part of two sides of a bargain.

Maggie is in her late twenties, brown-haired spinster daughter of self-made man Alick Wylie. She is so far unmarried, not because she is unremarkable as a woman, but because she lacks 'charm' - 'a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have.' In a slightly improbable (but convenient) start to the play, Maggie and her male relatives (Dad and two brothers) are confronted with John Shand, a poor young man, burning with desire for learning, and working as a railway porter to finance his studies. The male Wylies, impressed by his ambition, offer him a bargain - they will finance his studies on condition that in five years' time he will marry Maggie, if, that is, she agrees to have him. It is a canny bargain, and, with a legal document insisted on by Maggie, it is struck.

On the surface this appears to be the most ruthless and exploitative of situations from Maggie's point of view, a prime set-up for a sexist display of woman as commodity, used by men for whatever their purpose. Certainly 1908 isn't 1974, and Barrie lacks the kind of

far-reaching feminism we might wish to discover lurking in corners of popular literature. But this play is particularly interesting for the way it combines a conventional acceptance of marriage (woman dependent on man) with an acute recognition of the economic basis of the marriage contract, and of the struggle of sexual politics within the marriage. What has been popularly seen as Barrie's 'feminine sensibility', his whimsical excursions into fantasy (the unconscious?) springs in his plays from a critical attitude towards social and sexual stereotype; he utilises gentle, rather than savage, satire and fantasy to allow him to explore alternatives.

Both Maggie and John accept the sex stereotype of their class: Maggie, brought up to expect marriage, believes herself to be mousy, inferior, unimportant, unworthy. John, upright, humourless, ambitious, believes himself to be a strong man, believes himself to be worthy of great things, of success in the world. However, Maggie, also true to stereotype, dreams of love as the grand romance, the grand passion, and knowing that no man will see her as his romance, accepts the bargain of marriage with John, as the only way to secure her future.

Six years later, when John has been elected MP, against his baronet opposer, Maggie having worked at his side - 'learned French, the piano and shorthand' - she offers to release him from his bargain, in a tortuous scene where she wrestles with her own conflicting emotions. For John has become her ideal, the possible object of her grand passion, and she knows that his charisma will make more 'charming' women flock. And sure enough charm personified arrives in the languid hiccuping Lady Sybil, attracted by John's boorishness.

John insists on fulfilling the marriage contract, both he and Maggie knowing that he doesn't 'love' her - within the abstract meaning of the term. And gra-

dually, as he becomes a spokesman for women's suffrage, as Lady Sybil starts coming to his meetings, as Maggie watches John fall for the vapid feminine decadence of the British aristocracy, she herself sits, ostensibly knitting, and pouring suggestions into his ear which make his speeches in the house the devastating utterances they are. Maggie is the power behind the throne with a vengeance, but neither she nor John recognises the extent of her contribution.

The crunch comes when John and Sybil recognise their mad infatuation; for the first time Maggie acts alone, in her own interests (even though these 'interests' all coalesce in John). Her handling of the threat to her marriage is brave, witty, diplomatic, and the process effects a revolution in the way she and John see themselves and each other. With the support and active intervention of Lady Sybil's French aunt, John is forced to see through Sybil's empty languor. Maggie, trying desperately to hide her strength behind her perpetual knitting is forced into the open by the aunt, admitting to John and herself how important she is to his thinking and his speeches. By the end John has painfully come to recognise a different kind of 'charm', Maggie has recognised her strength, and the two are embarked on the beginnings of a relationship based on mutual respect.

Of course the revolution has its limits: Maggie still worships John, is still dependent on him, hasn't a social or economic role in her own right. She doesn't take the step taken by Nora in Ibsen's *The Doll's House*, of leaving home to discover herself, but in Barrie's play this is because John's experience and consciousness have been changed - not on the cards for Nora's husband. Barrie's psycho-sexual realism is based as much on a recognition of male as female stereotyping; his easy wit, or 'social satire' is his way in to confronting the necessary struggles which must take place if relationships between the sexes are to change.

As the play unfolds a two-way movement brings John down to size, while Maggie is brought up to size, so that by the end the throne is a lot smaller and Maggie is standing beside it, rather than crouching at its feet. The partial moral of the play is spoken by Maggie: 'Every man who is high up loves to think he has done it all himself; and the wife smiles and lets it go at that. It's our only joke. Every woman knows that.' But she says it to John, and it is thus no longer a hidden joke but a basis for change in their relationship. The symbol of the change is John's learning to laugh - the joke is shared.

Watching Dorothy Tutin's nervous dignity as Maggie provokes a curious sleight of vision; every Monday night she has been providing some of the same qualities of struggling female independence as Sarah Burton in *'South Riding'*, published in 1936. The fact that it is the same actress is a momentary continuity which points up some of the changes for women in those three decades, and also reminds us that literary history is as much part of its own time as other histories. 'What Every Woman Knows' is a play worth seeing; and it is interesting to speculate on what a more feminist approach to its production might yield. Certainly the production it gets at the Albery is professionally assured and psychologically sensitive. ■



Maggie in her late twenties

Micheline Wandor

Spans 143

Dory Previn



Unfortunately this is only part of a transatlantic telephone interview, due to difficulties in recording and transcribing.

By Marion Slade

I used to sing and tap dance with my uncles' band. They were of Irish descent and did country folk songs. One played harmonica, another played accordion and when I was ten or twelve, they asked me what instrument I wanted to play. I chose guitar, so I sort of gravitated towards it naturally.

So you never really felt uncomfortable about being on stage if you were on from that age?

I wasn't then, but when I grew older I did. Though my father insisted I become a performer, I really wasn't emotionally equipped for it. I got worse and worse until I totally withdrew from performing.

How do you feel about it now? You don't often do concerts do you?

No I don't. I still find it terrifying, but performing itself has grown better and better even though I still have to be practically pushed on stage. When I was just performing in those early days, I was just interpreting someone else's work. The reason it's getting easier for me now is that when I go out on stage, even though I'm performing, I'm communicating my own ideas, telling people what I have to say through music.

A lot of women who write and perform their own work feel that they have to put it across in a very serious way in order to be taken seriously. I think people find my dialogue very funny but not in the way that... Well, I've watched women on television commercials and as comediennes, and if they don't totally make fun of themselves, put themselves down and become grotesque, then nobody laughs at them.

Women aren't able to come out and do it in the same kind of way as a satirist or as a serious humorist, the way men do. There is no such thing with women. I think what we're asking is 'I've been an underdog too long, what I have to say is serious to me, so please take me seriously.' So obviously there is a reluctance to be funny in that.

But I don't feel that way any more. I'm only interested in myself as a human being first, and as a woman second; so as a being, I'm funny too, a humorous fool. I told them at Lincoln Centre, New York, that I'm very proud and I cherish the fact that though I'm feeling more and more a sense of authority over myself and my own power, at the same time, I'm a fool and a clown.

Through your work you show how you have suffered, yet you still manage to combine the point of your music with humour. Your songs of your experiences in the mental asylum made me feel like crying with you, but even then your strength came through.

Yes, but Marion, what do you do when you hit rock bottom? You either kill yourself or you drown in your own stew, or you start laughing at it. What else is there when it gets that ridiculous? But it's the kind of humour that is based on all these experiences, it's not idle humour and it's not surface humour. Who was it - some writer, a Greek patriot - that said, when all else fails - laugh.

And now you still have to be strong against all those people who label you self-indulgent and neurotic. How does that reaction to your work affect you?

Well, it makes me feel lots of things. It makes me feel insecure; it makes me say fuck them, that's their problem, I'll go on and do what I want to do; and it makes me laugh sometimes. What it's done more recently, is made my feeling for my work even stronger. After all the things that have happened to me in my life, to stop now would be the worst kind of self indulgence.

But you still need some kind of support, even now, some encouragement.

Yes I do. When I go and do a concert - the audiences, they laugh, they cry, they applaud, they laugh more than they cry, they get enraged and they yell. That all goes on - so they are responding. My friends love me and support me: one friend of mine said, 'the only trouble with you, Dory, is your outer shell is fragile but your centre is fierce.'

Do you have any trouble getting your songs on to record the way you want them to be. Is there commercial pressure?

No. As a matter of fact record companies don't ever know what to do with me or my work.

Do you think that making records is a removed form of communicating your ideas - unlike a concert where there is a direct relationship between you and the audience.

Well, I don't agree with you there. I think that when you make a record it's like a writer writing a book. I try to get my ideas and what I am across, as true as I possibly can get. It's essentially the words and not the music that I'm trying to communicate.

It's so easy to be totally misrepresented through the media. Do you avoid talking to the press and having publicity photos taken?

For long lengths of time I go into my writing and I only really come out of it to do an interview when I make a new album. Then I won't do another until the next album. I really hate having my photo taken, too.

Though people rarely write about you here, I have seen it printed that you can't be identified with because you're a 'mature woman'. As though anyone who hasn't 'made it' by twenty-five is dismissed as a has-been.

I think that's a cop out. If people dismiss my work as a result of that, then there's nothing I can do about it. That's an actuality but I would hate to think what would have happened to Joseph Conrad, who started writing at forty, if they had said that about him. Or what if Picasso had said, 'well, I'm thirty-five now, so that's it'? I think that's a lot of horseshit.

I think people either actually die - like they kill themselves with drugs; or they die in an enclosed mythological seclusion, where you never hear from them again. Or they come back a ripened and mature artist, and that's what I aim for. So all those people who put me down because of my age, I think that's a lot of shit and I'd like to talk to them after they're thirty-five and see if they feel the same way.

I read an interview with Peter Fonda a few years ago, and he said, 'I never listen to anybody over thirty-five'. I was interested to see that this year he celebrated his thirty-fifth birthday. I wonder if he doesn't listen to himself any more! I think a lot of young performers just burn themselves out because their instincts are based on inexperience.

On my first album, there's a song called *Twenty-Mile Zone* which is about screaming. A good friend of mine said I shouldn't have done it. She said to reveal that about myself publicly would do me a lot of harm, but I had to say it because it did happen to me. I think it was a good thing because then John Lennon wrote *The Primal Scream* and people began to admit it openly. When I performed it, all these people were laughing and clapping and carrying on - so they knew it too, right? They knew we all shared that experience but no one could ever admit it, so it made it all much better.

We're all exactly alike you know, there is nothing I could write about myself that millions of people have not done and I mean really the most secret closet things. I believe in getting those feelings out in writing and sharing them with everyone.

It must also have been difficult to be accepted as yourself, instead of being attached to Andre Previn. I saw him on his television programme the other day talking to two women and being really patronising. I think you're two very different people.

Yes, I think so. But I think there's an attraction between opposites; except opposites can also repel each other or worse.

So it was very difficult.

Well, it was, because I was raised as all little girls are raised with dolls and all that, to get married one day. The only difference with me was that my father, particularly, felt he was the same kind of minority and he really wanted some kind of recognition. He knew he wasn't going to get it himself, so I think he wanted me to get it for him.

Were you the only daughter?

No, I have a sister.

Did she feel the same kind of pressure?

No, she's completely married and completely the mother of three complete children. But with me, there was always this feeling that wouldn't let me settle, even though I tried to. All those conditioning things made me think I should. But all the time I was married I wrote all the while.

But writing for films, you have to write according to someone else's script, so it didn't really represent you.

Yes, but there were some things in which I manifested my own individuality, for whatever reason. Whether they were neurotic or not is not important. But I was ahead of my time in so far as I consciously decided not to have children. People drove me silly, I can't tell you how many times it was, 'well, why don't you have a child? When are you going to have a child?' I said openly then, and I still do now, I don't want them. I think we should take care of those that are here now. My mother still asks me why I don't get married again, I don't believe that she still actually says that.

Is it likely that you'll be coming over here?

Well, I don't know, you see I don't fly.

Yes, I heard that from United Artists over here, when I was trying to find out why you changed record companies. They wouldn't give me the reason though.

Well, mostly I think it was because I was with United Artists Publishing Company and their attitude toward my work was embarrassment. I actually found out that they never showed my songs to other artists. Now, since I've left, all kinds of people want to do my songs, but before I could never understand why no one wanted to do them. It was the head of the publishing company who found my work embarrassing and used to hide it. So that was the main reason I left.

Also I had a double contract. I was signed to United Artists Publishing and to the record company, so I thought to get out of one I'd have to get out of

the other. I think a place like Warner Brothers, who I'm with now, is more understanding to my kind of writing.

You know you can get here on a boat, Dory.

Well, that's the thing. I'm looking now at the Queen Elizabeth and the St. Raphael! Maybe around April, if the weather is warmer, I'll take a boat over.

You know I did have a reservation to come over last year. I must say that my work is much more well received in England than in the United States. I think that may have something to do with the fact that the British are much more language conscious, they listen more to lyrics. In this country, after someone tells them what it's about, they listen and they understand it. But it's always that somebody else has to tell them.

I think you'd find a lot of support here.

I think so too, I really do. They're excellent here but you know European papers have compared my work with Huxley's! Some American involved in Germany did a documentary on my work and myself - I couldn't believe it! You know it was the whole camera crew, and I said 'why would you want to come all this way and do this', and he said, 'Germany is ze first to discover ze poet!'

The reason I didn't come before was that Warners said that if I came over then, it would just have been a plug for United Artists Records, so I didn't want to do that. Anyway I had reservations on the QE2 and it stalled in the middle of the Atlantic. I would never have been able to perform when I got there. I'd have turned round, come back and never gone over again.

I've never been on a boat. I have what's known as a separation phobia. I can't bear to be separated from my roots, even though they're imaginary. If I could, I would be a recluse, never go out at all. I've been recording for four years; most people, after their first album, go zipping and jetting all over the world, but I only began last year. I hate being on the road, I never need to do anything other than my work, I need my friends of course but really I'm

obsessed with what I do.

I'd really like to see some copies of Spare Rib.

O.K. I'll send you a bundle. I'd like to know what you think, especially if you have criticisms which would help.

I believe in that, Marion, and I agree with you about that. That's why I hate critics who just put your work down. It's so destructive. It's only good if it can come from a positive thing, and then it becomes constructive and it really helps. But to just put you down is really shit. No, I'll really look at them carefully and write you about it.

It's been really good to talk with you, I've enjoyed it and good luck with your music, you must keep on playing.

Thanks, I wish there was more time to put into it. We just did our second gig and we really enjoyed it.

Is it all women?

No, because when I started, I couldn't find other women to play with, though I've met a lot since. So the other three are men. We get on closely and they support what I'm trying to do, and also I have learnt a lot from them about the way men relate to each other musically and their particular struggles.

Absolutely. That's why if people ask me if I'm feminist, I say I'm a human being and a woman. I think many people don't really understand feminism. Also that's why in my songs, I always try to take the male point of view too, even in a song like *Coldwater Canyon* off this new album. Although the guy put the woman through a lot, she did make the decision to go to his house.

So there are all those things which are very important. If you get any kind of power or authority, I don't believe it should be used to put down the other sex, otherwise it's just reversing what men have done. If we learn nothing else from suffering for so long, we've got to learn a compassion. If we don't, we'll become overdogs and the whole fucking thing will start all over again. □

Dory Previn - Brief Biography

BORN: Dory Langdon, October 22nd 1935 in Woodbridge, New Jersey.

EDUCATION: Primarily Catholic schools. After completing High school, she studied acting for a year at the American Academy Of Dramatic Art.

WORK: Spent several years as actress, model, dancer and nightclub singer, accompanying herself on guitar. Became more involved in writing lyrics. Moved to New York to find work as a writer, where a friend sent some of her lyrics to MGM. Moved to West Coast after being offered a contract for five months as a junior writer at MGM. Under this contract she was supposed to have worked as lyricist with Andre Previn, but was never introduced to him and was let go. To be able to keep writing, she took a series of odd jobs - bookkeeper in a gas station, working in a paper company. Finally she was employed as a writer by UPA, an animation firm. Met Andre Previn and they began working together. They married eighteen months later. Their marriage ended several years ago.

RECORDINGS: All of Dory Previn's albums have received record awards.

1970 - On My Way To Where

1971 - Mythical Kings & Iguanas

1971 - Reflections In A Mud Puddle/Taps Tremors & Timesteps

1972 - Mary C Brown & The Hollywood Sign

1973 - Live At Carnegie Hall

1974 - Dory Previn

FILMS: Wrote theme and title songs for films for ten years. Received Academy Award nominations for:-

1960 - 'A Faraway Part Of Town' from the film 'Pepe'.

1962 - 'Second Chance' from the film 'Two For The Seesaw'.

1969 - 'Come Saturday Morning' from the film 'The Sterile Cuckoo'.

Both 'Come Saturday Morning' and the theme from 'The Valley Of The Dolls' were gold record sellers for The Sandpipers and Dionne Warwick respectively. 'You're Gonna Hear From Me' from the film 'Inside Daisy Clover' was recorded over eighty times. Other credits include themes for 'Goodbye Charlie', 'One, Two, Three' and the most recent screen credit was the lyric to 'Last Tango In Paris'.

BOOKS: On My Way To Where - lyrics published in book form by McCall's in hardback (1971) and Bantam books in paperback (1972)

PLAYS: Mary C Brown & The Hollywood Sign - A play with music, based on the starlet who jumped from the Californian landmark. It once went into production, but never opened and is currently being rewritten. She has also written and sung theme songs for television plays and documentaries.



Don't Put Him Down

oh babe
he loves you
but he just can't make it with you
but he just can't tell you it's true
how can he pass the test
when he just can't hardly move himself
let alone prove himself the best

oh babe
he wants you
but he just can't get it on as you planned
and i guess a girl just can't understand
how much a guy goes through
all she has to do is let herself
she doesn't have to get herself up
on cue
like a performing seal in a zoo

how was last night's performance babe?
was it better than the night before?
are the old credentials
any good any good any more
or is the act beginning to bore you?
he can sing!
he can dance!
he can juggle!
he's a reg'lar one-man band
his costume's a little tattered
his label says made in japan
but he beats his battered drum
and he rattles his empty can
and he somehow gets his flag to fly
looka him
looka him
he's a man!

oh babe
inside him
it's like there's a little kid in a jail
crying denying he's fragile and frail
hey looka him
he's a male
but it's the wail
of the weary minstrel
it's the dance
of the desperate clown
singing don't put me down
if i fail
please babe
don't put me down
if i fail

from Mary C Brown and the Hollywood Sign
- United Artists.

When A Man Wants A Woman

when a man wants a woman
he says it's a compliment
he says he's only trying to capture her
to claim her
to tame her
when he wants everything of her
her soul her love
her life forever and more
he says
he's persuading her
he says
he's pursuing her

but when a woman wants a man
he says she's threatening him
he says she's only trying
to trap him
to train him
to chain him
when she wants anything of him
a look a touch
a moment of his time
he says
she's demanding
he swears
she's destroying him

why is it
when a man wants a woman
he's called a hunter?
but when a woman wants a man
she's called a predator?

From Mary C Brown And The
Hollywood Sign - United Artists.



Easy Rider Baby Sling

**For travelling, shopping and working, it's the most practical
- and the cheapest - multi-purpose baby carrier you can buy.**

- New freedom for everyone with a baby ■
- Instead of clumsy prams and pushchairs which have to be folded and unfolded it leaves your hands and arms free.
- The baby sits comfortably in padded supports on your front or your back.
- It's light, weighs only 14oz, and washable.
- It's made to last in navy blue canvas.
- It has a fully padded head-rest for the new born and it's roomy enough for a toddler.

We decided we had to make this baby carrier a Spare Rib Christmas offer after Constance took it round to a friend, whose colicky, insomniac three week old snuggled down at once and fell asleep for the first time without tears while her mother made coffee.



The sling costs £4.25 (postage and packing included). Please make cheques payable to Spare Ribs Ltd, and send with this coupon to Spare Rib, c/o Easy Rider, 8a Christchurch Avenue, London NW6

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34	towards a new order self interview, reader sculptor, Cathy Ward	Ward, Cathy	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for towards a new order self interview, reader sculptor, Cathy Ward. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
34	Cathy Ward with baby	Ward, Cathy	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Cathy Ward with baby. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
35	Cathy Ward self interview	Ward, Cathy	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Cathy Ward self interview. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
35	Sculpture by Cathy Ward	Ward, Cathy	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Sculpture by Cathy Ward. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
36	Conversation about women's theatre between Jackie Thrupp and Sheila Hancock	Thrupp, Jackie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Conversation about women's theatre between Jackie Thrupp and Sheila Hancock. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have

			regarding this item.
36	Jackie Thrupp		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Jackie Thrupp. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
37	what do you think of the idea of a theatre run by women for women? Not much	Thrupp, Jackie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for what do you think of the idea of a theatre run by women for women? Not much. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
37	Sheila Hancock		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Sheila Hancock. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	Conversation about women's theatre between Jackie Thrupp and Sheila Hancock	Thrupp, Jackie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Conversation about women's theatre between Jackie Thrupp and Sheila Hancock. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	scene from Sistershow with Jackie Thrupp		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for scene from Sistershow with Jackie Thrupp. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	scene from Deja Revue with Sheila Hancock		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for scene from Deja Revue with Sheila Hancock. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Scream Quietly or the neighbours will Hear by Erin Pizzey (Penguin)	Ashdown, Jane	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Scream Quietly or the neighbours will Hear by Erin Pizzey (Penguin). Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	from sream quietly		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for from sream quietly. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Illustration	Shivdasani, Terry	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Illustration. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Ann Oakley's study of Housework. Housewife Allen Lane.Sociology of Housework . Martin Robertson	Hall, Catherine	Usage Terms: © Catherine Hall
	Ann Oakley's study of Housework. Housewife		

40	Allen Lane.Sociology of Housework . Martin Robertson	Hall, Catherine	Usage Terms: © Catherine Hall
40	The Bottle Factory Outing Beryl Bainbridge. Duckworth	Woolf, Charlotte	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Bottle Factory Outing Beryl Bainbridge. Duckworth. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	Beryl Bainbridge		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Beryl Bainbridge. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
41	Superwoman rides into kids books. Aunt Fan by Peggy Blakeley. A&Cblack	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
41	Mrs Gronkwonk and the postoffice tower	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
41	aunt Fan with fists and brolly, tea and crumpet machine, Mrs gronkwonk work up feeling particularly energetic		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for aunt Fan with fists and brolly, tea and crumpet machine, Mrs gronkwonk work up feeling particularly energetic. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
42	stills from Scenes from a marriage		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for stills from Scenes from a marriage. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
43	Stardust	Rowe, Marsha	Usage Terms: © Marsha Rowe
43	THEATRE What every woman should know by JM Barrie with Dorothy Tutin and Dorothy Reynolds	Wandor, Michelene	Usage Terms: © Michelene Wandor
43	Maggie in her late twenties		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Maggie in her late twenties. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	Dory Previn part of a transatlantic telephone interview	Slade, Marion	Usage Terms: © (now) Marion Gilbert
44	Dory Previn album cover		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Dory Previn album cover. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
45	Dory Previn	Slade, Marion	Usage Terms: © (now) Marion Gilbert

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